



# US Department of the Interior

## *Permanent Change of Station Policy*



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# Permanent Change of Station Policy

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## **Chapter 1. General Eligibility for a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Move and Guidance for Initiating a Move**

### **1.1. Overview**

This Guide supplements Chapter 302 of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) (41 C.F.R. 302), Relocation Allowances. When offered relocation allowances, an employment service agreement and PCS travel authorization must be signed and approved before the employee is authorized to incur any PCS-related expenses.

The relocation allowances covered under this guidance is separate and unrelated to any relocation incentive that a current employee may be entitled to under their Bureau's established Relocation Incentive Program, which is managed by their Human Resources Office.

### **1.2. Involuntary and Voluntary Transfer Eligibility for Relocation Expense Allowances**

#### **1.2.1. Involuntary Transfer**

An involuntary transfer is a management-directed transfer requiring an employee to move 50 or more miles from their old residence than the old official duty station is from the same residence. An involuntary transfer is considered to be in the interest of the Government and allowable relocation expenses are paid. These include any of the following management-directed transfers (which are not predicated on employee accepting the reassignment):

- A. Employees relocated under a management-directed reassignment;
- B. Employees who receive some type of notification which indicates a clear intent on the part of the DOI to reassign the employee to a different official duty station, at which possible involuntary separations due to reduction in force (RIF) are anticipated; and
- C. DOI Employees who were involuntarily separated as a result of a reduction in force (RIF) and reemployed within one year in a different commuting area (when placement on the DOIs Reemployment Priority List can be verified).



### 1.2.2. Voluntary Transfer

Voluntary assignments are either “primarily for the employee’s convenience and benefit and are at his/her request” or “in the interest of the government.” Voluntary transfers deemed to be primarily for the benefit of the employee are not authorized reimbursement for relocation expenses. Voluntary transfers that are in the interest of the government are authorized reimbursement of relocation expenses.

A Voluntary Transfer "in the interest of the government" is eligible for relocation benefits reimbursement. DOI bureaus and offices must use the following criteria to determine relocation benefits eligibility:

- A. An employee is involuntarily transferred from one official station to another official station, and they meet the distance rule requirements for eligibility of relocation benefits
- B. An employee is voluntarily transferred from one official station to another and the transfer is not “primarily for the convenience or benefit of the employee or at his/her request”;
- C. A vacancy announcement or equivalent does not specify whether relocation expense allowances will be paid;
- D. A vacancy announcement is issued beyond the local commuting area and the following conditions are met:
  - a. The position is reasonably expected to exist for at least 3 years or more;
  - b. The position is listed for a GS-07 (or equivalent) and above, or for a GS-06 (or equivalent) and above with promotion potential beyond that of a GS-06 (or equivalent). (Note: If there is significant information showing that a position with a lower GS level cannot be filled with locally available applicants, then an exception may be made to this rule); and
  - c. An administrative determination has been made by an approving authority that necessitates the payment of relocation expense allowances to a transferring employee or new appointee. This determination must consider the following factors:
    - i. The number of well qualified employees in the local commuting area (upon consultation with HR);
    - ii. The diversity of the local candidate pool (upon consultation with HR);
    - iii. How quickly the position must be filled (upon consultation with HR);
    - iv. Hiring “freeze” constraints (upon consultation with HR);
    - v. Alternative considerations for meeting the human resource needs, such as details, training, automation, etc. (upon consultation with HR);
    - vi. The cost effectiveness of offering relocation;
    - vii. The need to provide incentive to prospective candidates due to labor shortages, working conditions, or other factors; and
    - viii. The possibility of offering other financial incentives such as relocation incentive bonus, recruitment incentive bonus, advance pay, etc., in lieu of offering relocation benefits; or
- E. An employee is hired under a voluntary direct hiring and the transfer is not “primarily for the convenience or benefit of the employee or at his/her request”;
- F. A student trainee is assigned to any position upon completion of college work and the transfer is not “primarily for the convenience or benefit of the new employee or at his/her request”;
- G. An employee is performing travel in accordance with the overseas tour renewal agreement;
- H. An employee is returning to the place of residence after completion of a prescribed tour of duty for the purposes of separation from Government service or separation from the overseas assignment for reassignment to the same or different Government agency;



- I. An employee is eligible for a “last move home” benefit upon separation from the Government (and the immediate family, i.e., spouse and dependents, in the event of the employee’s death prior to separation or after separation but prior to relocating);
- J. A career appointee to the Senior Executive Service (SES) as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(4), and a prior SES appointee who is returning to the official residence for separation and who will be retaining SES retirement benefits;

Bureaus and offices must require an individual to sign a declaratory statement when the individual submits an unsolicited application for placement consideration. A voluntary transfer that is "primarily for the convenience or benefit of the employee or at his/her request" resulting from the selection of an employee for transfer whose primary interest is in relocation, rather than in placement in a specific position, and who has signed the following statement will not be eligible for relocation benefits:

*I voluntarily request consideration for assignment to a position in another commuting area (or describe the particular position). I am making this request primarily for my personal convenience or benefit. I understand that, if selected, I will be responsible for all travel, transportation and relocation expenses associated with reporting for duty in that position.*

An employment application in response to a vacancy announcement is not unsolicited. When a vacancy announcement is to be issued for a position that has been determined to not be “in the interest of the government” the following statement must be included on the vacancy announcement:

*Travel, transportation, and relocation expenses will not be paid by the Department. Any travel, transportation and relocation expenses associated with reporting for duty in this position will be the responsibility of the selected employee.*

Selection of an employee for transfer who has responded to a vacancy announcement that contains this statement will not be eligible for relocation benefits.

A determination that offering relocation benefits are not in the interest of the government does not prohibit authorized officials from offering an incentive payment, such as: hiring incentive payments or relocation incentive payments. Please refer to the Department of the Interior Human Resources Manual for guidance on these incentive payments. If you have further questions concerning incentive payments you should refer to your bureau or office Human Resource office for additional guidance.

### 1.3. Distance Rules for Eligibility

When the transfer of an employee or the hire of a new appointee is determined to be in the interest of the government and the move meets the distance test of 50 miles, as defined by the Federal Travel Regulations Chapter 302-2.6, relocation benefits may be authorized for reimbursement. Generally, an employee may not be reimbursed for relocation expenses if they do not meet this distance test.

The distance test is met when the new official station is at least 50 miles further from the employee's current residence than the old official station is from the same residence. For example, if the old official station is 3 miles from the current residence, then the new official station must be at least 53 miles from that same residence in order to receive relocation expenses for the residence transactions. The distance between the official station and the residence is the shortest of the commonly traveled routes between them. The distance test does not take into consideration the location of the new residence. This follows the distance guidelines found in the *Federal Travel Regulations Chapter 302, Part 1, and Internal Revenue Service Publication 521, Moving Expenses*.

In certain limited circumstances, a bureau associate director of administration or higher authority may authorize the reimbursement of relocation if the following circumstances are found to exist:

- A. The one way commuting pattern between the old and new official station increases by at least 10 miles but no more than 50 miles; and
- B. There is an increase in the commuting time to the new official station by at least 30 minutes one way; and
- C. A financial hardship is imposed due to increased commuting costs. **NOTE:** A financial hardship must be a situation that would put the employee at risk of significant financial loss due to increased annual commuting costs of at least \$4,000.

If relocation benefits are authorized for a transfer that does not meet the distance test of 50 miles, all relocation expense reimbursements made to the employee will be considered non-deductible and they would be reportable as taxable income to the employee.

## 1.4. Relocation Entitlements and Discretionary Expenses

A new appointee is defined as someone is hired to the Federal government for the very first time, an employee who is returning to employment after a break of one year that was not related to a reduction in workforce action or a student trainee assigned to their first official duty station upon completion of his or her college work. A transferred employee is an employee who transfers from one official duty station to another.

When a hired employee is authorized relocation expense reimbursement, the expenses for which they may be reimbursed are based on whether or not they are a New Appointee or a Transferring Employee.

Certain relocation expenses are considered “entitlements”, which must be paid to the employee if they are incurred in accordance with Federal Regulation; others are “discretionary” relocation expenses, which may be authorized by the supervisor, but are not guaranteed. If a discretionary expense is authorized, it must be listed on the relocation authorization along with the description of any limitations of the expense.

Below are tables that identify the entitled and discretionary relocation expenses for a New Appointee and Transferring Employee and the applicable circumstances to which they apply.

### 1.4.1. New Appointees Relocation Expenses

<b>Table A: Assigned to First Official Station in the Continental United States (CONUS)</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation of employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Shipment of privately owned vehicle (POV) ( <a href="#">Subpart B of Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Per diem for employee only ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(4) Extended storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-8</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations). <b>NOTE:</b> Allowed for isolated duty stations only.	
(5) Transportation of a mobile home or boat used as a primary residence in lieu of the transportation of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-10</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	

**Table B: Assigned to First Official Station Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS)**

<b>Column 1— Entitlements</b> <b>Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary</b> <b>Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation of employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Shipment of privately owned vehicle (POV) ( <a href="#">Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Per diem employee only ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> ).	(2) Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) is not authorized in a foreign area; however, you may be entitled to the following under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (Government Civilians-Foreign Areas) which is available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402. (a) Foreign Transfer Allowance (FTA) (Subsistence Expense) for quarters occupied temporarily before departure from the 50 states or the District of Columbia for a official station in a foreign area incident to a permanent change of station and travel to first official station overseas. (b) Temporary quarters subsistence allowance (TQSA) when a transfer is authorized to a foreign area. (c) The miscellaneous expense portion of the FTA is authorized incident to first official station travel to a foreign area.
(3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(3) Use of relocation service companies only when transfer is to Alaska or Hawaii ( <a href="#">Part 302-12</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(4) Extended storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-8</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(4) Home marketing incentives only when transfer is to a non-foreign OCONUS area ( <a href="#">Part 302-15</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).

### 1.4.2. Transferring Employee Relocation Expenses

<b>Table A: Transfer Between Official Stations in the Continental United States (CONUS)</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation & per diem for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Househunting per diem & transportation, employee & spouse only ( <a href="#">Part 302-5</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Miscellaneous moving expense ( <a href="#">Part 302-16</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(2) Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) ( <a href="#">Part 302-6</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(3) Sell or buy residence transactions or lease termination expenses ( <a href="#">Part 302-11</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(3) Shipment of privately owned vehicle (POV) ( <a href="#">Subpart B of Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(4) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(4) Use of a relocation services company.
(5) Extended storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-8</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations). <b>NOTE:</b> Only when assigned to a designated isolated official station.	(5) Home marketing incentives ( <a href="#">Part 302-14</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(6) Transportation of a mobile home or boat used as a primary residence in lieu of the transportation of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-10</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(7) Relocation income tax allowance (RITA) ( <a href="#">Part 302-17</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	

<b>Table B: Transfer From CONUS to an Official Station Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS)</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation & per diem for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) is not authorized in a foreign area, however, you may be entitled to the following under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) (Government Civilians-Foreign Areas): (a) A Foreign Transfer Allowance (FTA) for quarters occupied temporarily before departure from the 50 states or the District of Columbia for a official station in a foreign area incident to a permanent change of station and travel to first foreign official station overseas. (b) Temporary quarters subsistence allowance (TQSA).
(2) Miscellaneous expense allowance ( <a href="#">Part 302-16</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(2) Property management services ( <a href="#">Part 302-15</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(3) Shipment of a privately owned vehicle ( <a href="#">Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(4) Extended storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-8</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(4) Use of relocation service companies when transfer is to Alaska or Hawaii ( <a href="#">Part 302-12</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(5) Relocation income tax allowance (RITA) ( <a href="#">Part 302-17</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations) <b>NOTE:</b> This is allowed when old and new official stations are located in the United States. Also allowed when instead of being returned to the former non-foreign area official station, an employee is transferred in the interest of the Government to a different non-foreign area official station than from the official station from which transferred when assigned to the foreign official station.	(5) Home marketing incentives when transfer is to Alaska or Hawaii ( <a href="#">Part 302-15</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
	(6) When transfer is to Alaska, Hawaii or a U.S. Territory TQSE may be allowed

<b>Table C: Transfer From OCONUS Official Station to an Official Station in CONUS</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation & per diem for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Shipment of a privately owned vehicle ( <a href="#">Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) ( <a href="#">Part 302-6</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations). <b>NOTE:</b> A TQSA under the DSSR may be authorized preceding final departure subsequent to the necessary vacating of residence quarters.	
(3) Miscellaneous expense allowance ( <a href="#">Part 302-16</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(4) Sell & buy residence transaction expenses or lease termination expenses ( <a href="#">Part 302-11</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations). <b>NOTE:</b> Allowed when old and new official stations are located in the United States. Also allowed when instead of being returned to the former non-foreign area official station, an employee is transferred in the interest of the Government to a different non-foreign area official station than from the official station from which transferred when assigned to the foreign official station.	
(5) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(6) Extended storage of household goods only when assigned to a designated isolated official station in CONUS ( <a href="#">Part 302-8</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(7) Relocation income tax allowance (RITA) ( <a href="#">Part 302-17</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	



<b>Table D: Transfer Between OCONUS Official Stations</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements</b> Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse	<b>Column 2— Discretionary</b> Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse
(1) Transportation & per diem for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Shipment of a privately owned vehicle (POV) ( <a href="#">Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) ( <a href="#">Part 302-6</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations). <b>NOTE:</b> TQSA may be authorized under the DSSR.	(2) Property management services ( <a href="#">Part 302-15</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(4) Miscellaneous expense allowance ( <a href="#">Part 302-16</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(5) Extended storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-8</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(6) Relocation income tax allowance (RITA) ( <a href="#">Part 302-17</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	

<b>Table E: Tour Renewal Agreement Travel</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements</b> Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse	<b>Column 2— Discretionary</b> Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse
(1) Transportation for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(2) Per diem for employee only ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	

<b>Table F: Return From OCONUS Official Station to Place of Actual Residence for Separation</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Shipment of a privately owned vehicle (POV) ( <a href="#">Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Per diem for employee only ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	

<b>Table G: Last Move Home for SES Career Appointees Upon Separation</b>	
<b>Column 1— Entitlements Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse</b>	<b>Column 2— Discretionary Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse</b>
(1) Transportation for employee & immediate family member(s) ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	(1) Shipment of privately owned vehicle (POV) ( <a href="#">Subpart B of Part 302-9</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).
(2) Per diem for employee only ( <a href="#">Part 302-4</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-7</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	
(4) Transportation of a mobile home or boat used as a primary residence in lieu of the transportation of household goods ( <a href="#">Part 302-10</a> of the Federal Travel Regulations).	

**NOTE:** Transferring Employees should always verify with their bureau PCS Coordinator what their discretionary entitlements are prior to incurring expenses.

## 1.5. Immediate Family

Any of the following members of an employee's household at the time he/she reports for duty at the new station are considered immediate family:

- A. Spouse.
- B. Same sex domestic partner of the relocating employee who meets the definition of a "domestic partnership" as set forth in FTR Chapter 300-3.1.
- C. Children of the employee, employee's spouse or of the employee's domestic partner who are unmarried and less than 21 years of age or who, regardless of age, are physically or mentally incapable of self-support. The term "children" will include natural offspring; stepchildren; adopted children; grandchildren, legal minor wards, or other dependent children who are under legal guardianship of the employee or employee's spouse; and a child born after the employee's effective date of transfer even when the travel of the employee's expectant spouse to the new official station is prevented at the time of the transfer because of advanced stage of pregnancy.
- D. Dependent parents (including step and legally adoptive parents) of the employee, employee's spouse or of the employee's domestic partner.
- E. Dependent brothers and sisters (including step- and legally adoptive brothers and sisters) of the employee, employee's spouse, or of the employee's domestic partner who are unmarried and less than 21 years of age or who, regardless of age, are physically or mentally incapable of self-support.

## 1.6. Two or More Family Members Employed

When two or more employees are members of the same immediate family and each are being relocated in the interest of the Government, the allowances authorized will apply either to:

- A. Each employee separately (provided that each gaining office has determined the move is for the benefit of the Government), in which instance none of the employee(s) would be eligible for any allowance as a member of the immediate family; or
- B. Only one employee, in which case the other employee(s) is eligible for allowances solely as a member(s) of the immediate family.

A determination as to which of the two alternatives is selected must be made in writing and signed by all employee members of the same immediate family. When employee family members elect separate allowances, the determination also must specify under which employee's authorization the non-employee family members will receive allowances. When employee family members elect separate allowances, a travel authorization will be issued for each employee and will indicate that a family member (must give name) will be traveling under a separate travel authorization as an employee.

## 1.7. Time Limitations on Incurrence of Expense

Employees will have one year from the time they report to their new official duty station to incur all authorized relocation expenses. Employee's may request an extension of one additional year to incur relocation expenses under specific compelling reasons that are related to the sale or purchase of a residence, and they are acceptable to the bureau associate director who is designated as the approving official for extension requests. Some examples of compelling reasons of an extension include but are not limited to the following:

- The purchase or sales contract falls through due to reasons beyond the employee's control.
- More time is needed to complete the construction of a new home at the new official duty station.
- The employee has been adversely affected in their efforts to purchase or build a new home due to an extended or prolonged TDY assignment of more than 4 months or a military duty assignment of more than 4 months.
- The employee has a relocation service contract and the contract requires a modification or amendment to allow the successful completion of the home sale. The number of days for the extension should be based on expected contract completion date.
- A natural or man-made disaster resulting in partial (30% or more) or full destruction of the old residence. The extension time should be based on the amount of time needed for repairs or rebuilding after the destruction. No extension will be given if the employee only collects insurance on the loss of the old residence.

## 1.8. Relocation Counseling for Transferring Employees and New Appointees

*No relocation policy can or should cover all of the expenses or remove all of the inconveniences that might be involved in relocation. The assumption is that a relocating employee will understand this and consider the professional and personal options involved when accepting a position.*

Employees are encouraged to examine all aspects of their lives prior to accepting a new position that will require them to report to a new duty station. Relocation expense payments are designed to pay only the authorized and allowed relocation expenses of a moving employee.

Relocation expense payments will not reimburse the employee for any loss on the sale of a home that is caused by a negative equity situation or required structural repair of an old residence. Employees who own homes should make a realistic examination of the value of their home based on current real estate market in the area of the home. They should examine the amount of their home mortgage and evaluate if they are in a negative equity situation.

They should also examine their financial status and determine if they have sufficient personal funds to pay for expenses that will not be covered by relocation benefits payments.

**NOTE:** Employees who are offered relocation benefits will be reimbursed relocation expenses that are allowed by the Federal Travel Regulations and the DOI Permanent Change of Station policy. Relocation expenses that are not specifically authorized or allowed will not be reimbursed.

## 1.9. Relocation Counseling Bureau and Office Requirements

Bureaus and Departmental Offices must ensure that sufficient numbers of relocation coordinators are identified to perform relocation coordination duties within each bureau or office. Relocation coordinators must have sound knowledge of: PCS policy, transportation management, and taxability of relocation expenses. It is recommended that relocation coordinators be provided with training on these different areas of relocation management to ensure accurate and concise counseling. This may be obtained from the General Services Administration (GSA), commercial training vendors and internal agency training courses.

Bureaus and Departmental Offices must provide relocating employees counseling on their authorized relocation expenses. This may be in either written counseling or verbal counseling. Relocating employees, Human Resources Specialists and Hiring Officials should be given the contact information of the relocation coordinators that are within their own bureau or departmental office.

Only a trained relocation coordinator may do the following:

- Create an employee relocation authorization from an employee relocation questionnaire;
- Request shipment and storage of household goods for a relocating employee; and
- Create a procurement request for Relocation Services.

Bureaus and Departmental offices will coordinate the relocation of employees with their Human Resource offices. HR offices will notify the employee of their hiring and they will set the report date of new employees. Employees who are eligible for relocation expense reimbursement will be given 45 days to report to their new duty station from the date they formally accept a job position.

A delayed report date gives the employee time to get their affairs in order at their old duty station and is required by the Federal Travel Regulations. Failure to give employees a delayed report date will adversely affect the employee's productivity and may cause significant impacts to the employee both financially and emotionally. It will also increase the risk to the bureau as there is a stronger probability that costs for the shipment of HHG and the cost of creating a task order for relocation services will increase significantly.

HR offices must notify their bureau relocation coordinators within 3 business days after a formal job offer has been accepted by an employee eligible for relocation benefits. They must provide the relocation coordinator with at least the following information:

- Employee name, address, phone number, and email;
- Hiring officials name, phone number, and email; and
- Expected report date of relocating employee

## 1.10. Temporary Change of Station (TCS)

DOI does not mandate the use of Temporary Change of Station as an alternative to extended TDY assignment. However, Interior bureaus may develop TCS policies on their own to facilitate the use of it as an alternative to extended TDY. Any bureau developed TCS policies will be in compliance with

existing TCS policy rules as detailed in the Federal Travel Regulations, Chapter 302, Part 3, Subpart E and Subpart F.

Bureaus that adopt the use of TCS will ensure that their policies fully describe under what circumstances TCS will be used. Also, bureaus will implement a TCS management plan which monitors current TCS assignments to determine if a TCS assignment is complete or about extend beyond 30 months.

Because the Financial Business Management System is not currently configured to process TCS payments, bureaus will develop manual business processes to track process and report TCS taxable payments.

## Chapter 2. PCS Charge Card Usage and PCS Advances

### 2.1. Overview

The DOI has mandated use of the Government-issued charge card. When notified of an employee that is relocating with benefits within the Bureau, the Bureau relocation coordinator will verify if the employee has a DOI charge card. If the employee has a charge card the coordinator will notify the bureau Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) so that the charge card can be reassigned to the proper bureau hierarchy. If the employee does not have a charge card, the coordinator will work with the bureau A/OPC to ensure that the employee is able to apply for a charge card as soon as possible. If an employee is relocating between DOI bureaus and has a Government-issued charge card, it must be cancelled and a new one be issued by the new bureau.

The DOI Charge Card Program has designated lodging as a centrally-billed expense and will be billed directly to the bureau, which reduces the need for a PCS cash advance from the Finance office. Cash advances from the Finance office will only be issued under limited circumstances. Please consult with the PCS Coordinator for more information. Taxable entitlements are still the employee's responsibility and will be reflected on the employee's Leave and Earnings Statement.

### 2.2. DOI Government-Issued Charge Card

#### 2.2.1. Overview

The DOI Government-issued charge card must be used for all the following official travel expenses: airfare, lodging and rental car expenses (Househunting Trip only). It is encouraged to be used for Meals & Incidental Expenses (M&IE), parking, taxis, etc. whenever feasible.

The DOI Government-issued charge card is an integrated charge card. This means that one card may be used for three different business lines (travel, fleet, and/or purchase). Relocation expenses are charged to the travel business line.

*New employees to the Department should contact the Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) for assistance in applying for a charge card. This will facilitate the processing of PCS related travel needs. Specific policies regarding the use of the Government-issued charge card can be found at <http://www.doi.gov/pam/integratedcard.html> Employees relocating between two different DOI bureaus need to close their Government charge card account and obtain a new one.*

Two types of travel transactions will post to a Government-issued charge card account:

1. Centrally-billed transactions: These include costs for airfare, hotels, rental car and related expenses, parking, and taxis. These transactions are charged directly to the Bureau and appear as memo items on the charge card statement. All centrally-billed transactions must be listed on the househunting, en route, and temporary quarters travel vouchers so that appropriate taxes may be applied. Since lodging is a centrally-billed expense, relocating employees may only use the charge card for costs not to exceed the allowable PCS lodging allowance. Any amount over the PCS lodging allowance should be paid on a personal card. Any overage charged to the government charge card must be reimbursed to the Government by the employee by deducting the amount of such overage from the travel reimbursement.
2. Individually-billed transactions: These include costs for meals, ATM withdrawals, and ATM fees. The traveler is required to pay these charges upon receipt of the monthly charge card statement. Travelers are reimbursed through the submission of travel voucher(s). The amount due shown on the



monthly Government-issued charge card statement must be paid in full by the statement due date, even if the traveler has not yet filed a voucher or been reimbursed.

The Government-issued charge card **MAY** be used by the employee for the following PCS expenses:

- Airline tickets for the employee (see note below regarding tickets for family members)
- Other forms of necessary transportation for the employee (Alaska Marine Highway, ferry passages, bus, train, etc.)
- ATM cash withdrawal for meals—as authorized by per diem rates
- Lodging (Exception to this rule is when an employee is authorized and claims a Lump Sum reimbursement of Temporary Quarters or Lump Sum Househunting Trip expenses.)
- Parking at airport (when authorized for househunting trip only)
- Rental trucks—if authorized for self shipment
- Rental cars and fuel (when authorized for househunting trip only)

The following items **MAY NOT** be purchased with the Government-issued charge card. This list is not all inclusive and other items may apply:

- Purchase of goods and services (clothing, cameras, etc)
- Fuel and repair for personal vehicles (mileage may be claimed for vehicle)
- Miscellaneous expenses
- Real estate expenses
- Shipment and temporary storage of household goods
- Room service
- Video rentals
- Mini bar

The employee **SHOULD** use the office's Government-issued corporate card for the following:

- Airline ticket for employee and spouse when authorized a househunting trip
- Airline ticket for employee and/or immediate family members for en route travel
- Other forms of necessary transportation for the employee and/or immediate family members (Alaska Marine Highway, ferry passages, bus, train, etc.)

NOTE: Only in rare instances, and with the prior approval of the Bureau PCS Coordinator, can an employee purchase a family member's airfare using their Government-issued charge card.

## 2.2.2. Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Charge Card Advances

The Government-issued charge card has ATM functionality. ATM advances may be used for certain Bureau approved transactions. They appear as individually billed transactions on the charge card, which means the cardholder is responsible for paying these charges 30 days upon receipt of the bankcard monthly statement, even if the cardholder has not filed a voucher or received reimbursement through a travel voucher.

The amount allowable for an ATM advance is the total of the authorized M&IE and any other reimbursable expenses, not to exceed daily or weekly ATM thresholds. The ATM withdrawal may be taken out up to five days prior to the travel expense.

## 2.3. Travel Advances

### 2.3.1. Overview

Bureaus have the discretion of issuing travel advances.

Approved travel advances are sent directly to the employee's EFT (electronic funds transfer) address upon receipt of a signed and approved **Advance of Funds Application**.

Advances of funds for certain relocation expenses may be made in stages, as expected expenses are incurred. Each advance should be made as close as possible to the time of actual need.

*Advances must be repaid in cash or by submission of travel vouchers within 30 days after completion of each segment of the relocation process. If the relocation is delayed after an advance has been issued, the employee is required to repay the advance immediately.*

Failure to timely repay travel advances may result in payroll deductions.

**NOTE:** When submitting relocation reimbursement vouchers with the intent of using any reimbursed funds due from the Government to repay a travel advance issued for househunting and temporary quarters, employees should be reminded that all of the reimbursable items are considered taxable income; therefore, the amount reimbursed will be reduced by the amount of taxes. The after-tax balance owed the employee after taxes will be applied to the outstanding travel advance. If that balance does not cover the amount advanced, the employee will have to submit a check for the difference to their bureau finance office. If you have questions concerning this process, please consult with your bureau relocation coordinator.

## Chapter 3. Househunting Trip

### 3.1. Overview

The gaining office determines when it is in the Government's best interest to authorize a househunting trip for the employee and spouse to find permanent living quarters to rent or purchase. Other immediate family members, including domestic partners, are not authorized to travel on a househunting trip at the Government's expense. The approving official may authorize a househunting trip for a reasonable period not to exceed ten (10) calendar days.

Prior to making travel arrangements for a househunting trip the employee must have an approved signed travel authorization indicating the mode of transportation and time allowed. The authorization ensures that the employee is eligible for reimbursement of discretionary househunting trip relocation expenses.

A househunting trip affects the number of days allowable in temporary quarters. (See paragraph 5.2)

**NOTE:** New appointees and employees assigned under the Government Training Act (5U.S.C. 4109) are not eligible for a househunting trip expenses allowance.

### 3.2. Authorization

When determined to be in the interest of the Government, a househunting trip may be authorized by the gaining office if the:

- employee has formally agreed to transfer to the new duty station, has an approved signed travel authorization, signed an employment service agreement, and established the date of transfer;
- employee will not reside in government or other prearranged quarters at the new duty station;
- distance between the present duty station and new assignment is 75 or miles apart by a usually traveled route;
- old and new duty station is within the United States

### 3.3. Time Limit

Relocating employees must complete the househunting trip prior to the day before reporting to the new official duty station. The employee and spouse may take separate househunting trips; however, the overall cost of both trips is limited to the cost that would have been incurred if the employee and spouse had traveled together on one round trip.

A separately traveling spouse's trip must be completed the earlier of: the day before the family relocates to the new duty station or one day prior to the end of the one year period allowed for relocation.

## 3.4. Transportation

### 3.4.1. Air Transportation

Generally, the mode of transportation authorized for the househunting trip should afford a minimum of travel time and a maximum amount of time at the new duty station. Usually, common carriers (airplanes and trains) are the most effective means of transportation. If the employee does not yet have a Government-issued charge card, the transportation will be charged to the gaining bureau's corporate charge card. The spouse's transportation will always be charged to the bureau's corporate charge card.

When using common carrier transportation for the househunting trip, a compact rental car may be authorized. Taxi fare reimbursement is limited only to transportation between the common carrier terminals and the residence at the old duty station or place of lodging at the new duty station.

Mileage reimbursement to the airport will be at the current POV mileage rate in effect at the time of the trip.

### 3.4.2. Personally Owned Vehicle

Use of a privately owned automobile (POV) will be authorized and used when the distance of travel is less than 250 miles by the most commonly traveled routes. Exceptions to this requirement will be made with supervisor approval for the following reasons:

- It can be documented that the cost of common carrier transportation is a more affordable transportation option than POV, when considering time in transit, cost, and transportation needs at the new official station;
- Either the employee or spouse is physically impaired;
- The employee or spouse does not own or lease a POV;
- The employee and spouse has only one POV that is used for family transportation; or
- The owned POV is not roadworthy for such a trip.

Mileage reimbursement for a househunting trip is based on the POV mileage rate for relocation moves that is in effect at the time of the trip. The current mileage rate may be found in [IRS Publication 521](#), on the IRS website.

## 3.5. Per Diem

There are two methods of per diem reimbursement for a househunting trip. The method must be selected by the employee prior to beginning the trip and specified on the travel authorization.

### 3.5.1. Method 1: Locality Actual Subsistence Rate

The per diem rates for a househunting trip are based on the Standard CONUS Per Diem Rate in effect for the dates of travel and calculated in a similar manner as per diem for temporary duty travel. The M&IE rate for the first and last day of travel is limited to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the daily rate. The employee's per diem will be calculated based on the full standard CONUS rate. The spouse's per diem rate will be calculated at  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the employee's per diem rate.

If the employee and the spouse are traveling separately and at different times to perform the househunting trip, both the employee and spouse are eligible to claim per diem at the full per diem rate.

The actual lodging cost is claimed for each calendar day and is limited to the standard CONUS lodging rate for the employee and spouse if applicable. The employee should be advised to keep all lodging receipts – they will need to submit these with their travel voucher.

The cost of pet care is not reimbursable while a relocating employee or their spouse performs their househunting trip.

### 3.5.2. Method 2: Lump Sum Reimbursement

Employee and spouse may be offered a lump sum per diem rate to make a househunting trip. The purpose of the lump sum reimbursement is to reduce the administrative process expenses and the Government's overall cost for relocating an employee. Before an employee can be entitled to the lump sum reimbursement for per diem expenses of a househunting trip, four conditions must be met. These conditions are:

- 1) The travel authorizing official must agree that a househunting trip is necessary;
- 2) The employee must agree to accept the lump sum method of reimbursement;
- 3) The employee must sign an employment service agreement; and
- 4) The travel authorization must authorize the lump sum method of reimbursement for the househunting trip.

The selection must be made prior to beginning the trip. Receipts are not required when using the lump sum method of reimbursement.

Employees, who opt to be reimbursed for househunting using the lump sum method, should not use their Government-issued charge card to purchase lodging or meals since these are centrally-billed items. The lump sum payment is intended to be an up-front reimbursement to the employee for the cost of these allowances. Once this payment has been made to the employee, no other reimbursement will be made.

If the employee and spouse make the househunting trip (either together or separately), multiplying the locality rate by 6.25 determines the total amount of reimbursement. If only one person makes the trip, multiplying the locality rate by 5 determines the total amount of the reimbursement.

Computation for the Lump Sum Method	
Employee or spouse travel	5.00 X locality rate
Employee and spouse travel	6.25 X locality rate

## Chapter 4. En Route Transportation and Per Diem for Employee and Immediate Family

### 4.1. Overview

En Route transportation is defined as transportation and per diem costs incurred while traveling from an old official duty station to report to a new official duty station. En Route transportation and per diem may only be taken and claimed once for the employee and their immediate family members. However, the employee and immediate family members may travel en route separately and at different times, if needed.

### 4.2. Transportation

The employee and members of the employee's immediate family may be authorized to travel either by privately owned vehicle (POV) or other common carrier means which are advantageous to the Government. The employee's gaining agency will determine the method of transportation that best suits the needs of the agency and employee.

If traveling by other common carrier means, tickets should be charged to the gaining office's Government-issued corporate charge card account. The employee's individual Government-issued charge card should only be used for their individual expenses. Receipts for common carrier expenses must be submitted with the travel claim.

If travel is authorized by POV, the travel should be accomplished by a direct, commonly traveled route. Costs will not be reimbursed if there is excess mileage driven or circuitous routes taken without justification, such as unsafe weather conditions, vehicle repairs are required, illness, etc. Additionally, annual leave will be charged for any excess driving time that results from circuitous routes that are taken without justification.

When traveling via POV within CONUS, mileage rate reimbursement is based on the IRS deductible mileage rate in effect for moving purposes. This rate may change each calendar year and employees are advised to check these rates, which are listed in IRS Publication 521- Moving Expenses. Mileage reimbursement is based on the mileage of the commonly traveled direct route between the old and new official duty station. Excess mileage will not be paid unless justified by severe conditions, such as severe weather, impassable roads, etc...

When traveling via POV OCONUS (Outside the Continental United States) PCS mileage rate will be 150% of the IRS established deductible mileage rate for the Lower 48. The rate applies to those miles driven in Canada and Alaska. Odometer readings must be documented on the travel claim for OCONUS rates to apply. The employee will be taxed on any reimbursement greater than the IRS established rate.

If more than one POV is used, it must be fully justified and indicated on the travel authorization. Use of more than one POV is authorized as advantageous to the Government only under the following special circumstances:

- A. There are more members of the immediate family traveling together than reasonably can be transported with luggage in one vehicle;

- B. Because of age or physical condition, special accommodations are necessary in transporting a member of the immediate family in one vehicle;
- C. Employee must report to the new official station in advance of the family who delay travel for acceptable reasons, such as completion of school term, sale of property, settlement of personal business affairs; or
- D. In advance of the employee's reporting date, immediate family members must travel to the official station for acceptable reasons, such as to enroll children in school at the beginning of the term.



### 4.3. Per Diem Allowances

When traveling via other common carrier means, per diem allowances for employees and immediate family members of a transferred employee will be paid based on the actual travel time necessary. When traveling via POV per diem allowances will be paid based on an average driving distance of 350 miles per day. The per diem rates for en route travel are as follows:

Per Diem Rates Applicable to En Route Travel	
When traveling in	Your Per diem rate will be based on
CONUS	The Standard CONUS per diem rate
OCONUS	The applicable OCONUS locality rate
The Alaska Marine Highway	The highest CONUS M&IE rate. <b>NOTE:</b> State rooms for lodging on the Alaska Marine Highway are considered part of the transportation cost, not the cost of lodging, and are not reimbursable.

Per Diem is not reimbursable when the total travel time from the old official duty station to the new official duty station is 12 hours or less. When travel is more than 12 hours, per diem will be reimbursed in the same manner as Temporary Duty (TDY) travel, as follows:

#### 4.3.1. Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE)

Employee M&IE		
When travel is		Your allowance is
More than 12 but less than 24 hours		75% of the applicable M&IE rate for each calendar day you are in a travel status.
24 hours or more, on	The day of departure	75% of the applicable M&IE rate
	Full days of travel	100% of the applicable M&IE rate
	The last day of Travel	75% of the applicable M&IE rate

Immediate Family M&IE	
Spouse or Same-Sex Domestic Partner (not accompanying the employee)	M&IE will be calculated based on the spouse or same-sex domestic partners travel time, in the same manner as the employee's M&IE is calculated above.
Spouse or Same-Sex Domestic Partner (accompanying the employee)	An additional 75% of the employee's rate.
Dependents 12 years and older	An additional 75% of the employee's rate or the spouse/domestic partners rate when not accompanying the employee.
Dependents under 12 years	An additional 75% of the employee's rate or the spouse/domestic partners rate when not accompanying the employee.

### 4.3.2. Lodging

When overnight lodging is not required only M&IE is reimbursable. When lodging is required, the employee and/or immediate family are reimbursed their actual lodging cost not to exceed the maximum allowable lodging rate. Receipts for lodging expenses must be submitted with the travel claim. The maximum allowable lodging rate is calculated as follows:

Maximum Allowable Lodging Rate	
Employee	100% of the applicable lodging rate
Spouse or Same-Sex Domestic Partner (not accompanying the employee)	Lodging will be calculated based on the spouse or same-sex domestic partner's en route travel, in the same manner as the employee's lodging rate is calculated above
Spouse or Same-Sex Domestic Partner (accompanying the employee)	An additional 75% of the employee's rate
Dependents 12 years and older	An additional 75% of the employee's rate, or the spouse/domestic partners rate when not accompanying the employee
Dependents under 12 years	An additional 50% of the employee's rate, or the spouse/domestic partners rate when not accompanying the employee

## Chapter 5. Temporary Quarters

### 5.1. Overview

Temporary quarters is defined as any lodging obtained from private or commercial sources to be occupied **temporarily** by the employee or members of his/her immediate family until more suitable permanent lodging can be obtained. Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) is defined as expenses incurred by the employee and his or her immediate family while occupying temporary quarters. Temporary quarters may be obtained at either the old official duty station or the new official duty station.

TQSE is not an entitlement, but a discretionary allowance to be authorized only when the Agency determines it to be in the best interest of the Government.

TQSE may be authorized only if the mileage from the old official duty station to the new official duty station meets the 50 mile distance test. TQSE will not be authorized at the new official duty station if an employee is moving directly into Government-owned permanent quarters, however he or she may still occupy temporary quarters at the old official duty station if needed. TQSE must be authorized prior to the employee moving into the temporary quarters.

Occupancy of temporary quarters must be completed within one year from the report date of the transfer or appointment. All members of the family must occupy temporary quarters concurrently and reimbursement is measured on consecutive days. TQSE begins when the employee or any member of the immediate family commences living in temporary quarters for which a claim is made. Once TQSE has begun, the period runs consecutively and can only be interrupted by temporary duty travel. If an employee moves into his/her permanent residence while awaiting settlement or arrival of household goods, this automatically terminates the temporary quarter's subsistence allowance.

**NOTE:** New appointees and employees assigned under the Government Training Act (Public Law 85-807) are not authorized a TQSE reimbursement.

### 5.2. Actual Expense Method for Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expense

As a general policy, actual TQSE will be authorized for a period **not to exceed (NTE) 30 consecutive days**. If no househunting trip was authorized or taken, requests for an additional period of 30 days (or less) NTE a total of 60 consecutive days may be granted, provided a written request is submitted through the appropriate delegated authority for approval.

If a househunting trip was authorized and taken by the employee and/or spouse, TQSE will be limited to 30 days maximum. Under extenuating circumstances only, extensions of no more than 15 days may be requested, NTE a total of 45 days of TQSE. All such requests must be made **prior** to the end of the first 30-day period.

Requests for extension of TQSE beyond 45 or 60 days, whichever is applicable, must be supported by significant compelling reasons. The approval level for these extensions must be set at the Associate Directors level in each bureau. Consideration to approve these requests must have concurrence by a Bureau Finance Division Chief.

Extensions of TQSE are not automatic. If it can be shown that the employee has not made a whole-hearted effort to locate permanent housing, requests for extensions will not be granted. Bureaus may allow additional extension(s) based on housing market conditions in the area of the new official duty station, but the justification must be thoroughly documented and approved through the specified authority.

Extensions of TQSE will be authorized only in situations where there is a demonstrated need for the additional time due to circumstances which have occurred during the first 60-day period of temporary quarters and which are determined to be beyond the employee's control, such as:

- A. Shipment and/or delivery of household goods were delayed due to strikes or acts of God, such as hazardous weather, floods, fires;
- B. Sudden illness, injury, or death of employee or immediate family member; or
- C. New residence cannot be occupied because of unanticipated problems, such as delays in settlement.

Situations which would not generally justify an extension of time in temporary quarters beyond 60 days include:

- A. The spouse's continued employment at the old official duty station area, which delays the movement of the family to the new area;
- B. The children's continued attendance in school(s) at the old duty location, which delays the family's move;
- C. Inability to locate permanent quarters (rental, lease, or purchase) in an area of moderate housing availability, due to personal preferences and decisions.;
- D. Personal decisions to have a home constructed in areas of moderate housing availability. (Construction typically requires 90 to 120 days, or longer);
- E. Acceptance of an extended possession date at the time the contract for permanent residence was signed;
- F. Generally, using home marketing of a residence at the old official duty station as justification for occupying temporary quarters or for extension of time in temporary quarters;
- G. The employee causes a delay in delivery of their household goods due to their inactivity. An example of this is the employee failing to call the household goods shipper to arrange for the delivery of their goods upon arranging for the occupancy of a permanent residence;
- H. Delays in finding permanent housing due to a spouse's inability to participate in the search for such housing;

Under no circumstances will TQSE be paid for a period exceeding 120 days total.

Reimbursement of TQSE will be on an **actual** expense basis for lodging, meals, and laundry/dry cleaning. Telephone charges, even though made in connection with locating permanent housing, are **not** reimbursable. Similarly, local transportation expenses, included those associated with obtaining permanent housing, are not reimbursable.

Receipts are required for all lodging expenses and for any claimed amount over \$75.00. Lodging receipts must show the name and address of the lodging establishment, as well as the period of time covered.

Payments of lodging to relatives and/or friends are not reimbursable unless there are demonstrated justifications that the costs incurred equates to the added costs that resulted from providing housing to the employee and/or his family. As to the reasonableness of expenses when staying with relatives, it has been held that it is not reasonable for employees to agree to pay relatives the same amounts they would have to pay for lodging in motels.

A temporary quarter's subsistence worksheet must be submitted by the employee itemizing all temporary subsistence expenses incurred on a daily basis. Contact your bureau relocation coordinator for a copy of this worksheet.

### 5.3. Maximum Reimbursement for Actual Expense Method

The temporary quarter's rate for OCONUS locations (i.e. - Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa) is based on the prescribed locality rate for that area. These rates may be found on the GSA per diem rates table.

The daily maximum reimbursement allowed while occupying temporary quarters within CONUS is as follows:

The "maximum daily amount" of TQSE under the actual expense method		
For	The first 30 days of temporary quarters	Any additional days of temporary quarters
Employee and/or Unaccompanied Spouse	Standard CONUS rate	.75 times the standard CONUS rate
Accompanied Spouse or member of the immediate family who is age 12 or older	.75 times the standard CONUS rate	.50 times the standard CONUS rate
A member of the immediate family who is under age 12	.50 times the standard CONUS rate	.40 times the standard CONUS rate

Reimbursement for OCONUS is also based on the same percentages as identified for CONUS.

### 5.4. Lump Sum Method for Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expense

DOI allows employees to claim a lump sum for TQSE; however, the employee must choose between the actual and lump sum reimbursement prior to incurring TQSE expenses. The employee's decision must be indicated on the travel authorization and may not be changed at a later date. Lump sum TQSE is limited up to 30 days, but approving officials may authorize for less than 30 days. No extensions are allowed under this method.

Under the lump sum method, employees are entitled to three-fourths of the maximum per diem rate for the locality of the new official duty station, plus an additional one-fourth for each member of the immediate family. There is no additional reimbursement if the amount is insufficient to cover actual expenses. No receipts or itemized worksheet are required with the travel voucher claim for TQSE under the lump sum method. Employees may claim for the lump sum at any time after they have been issued a relocation authorization and signed a service agreement.

**NOTE:** Employees who opt to be reimbursed for TQSE using the lump sum method should not use their Government-issued charge card to purchase temporary quarters lodging or meals. The lump sum payment is intended to be an upfront reimbursement to the employee for these costs. No other reimbursement may be made to the employee once this payment has been made.

## Chapter 6. Transportation and Temporary Storage of Household Goods (HHG) and Professional Books, Papers and Equipment

### 6.1. Overview

There are two methods allowed to ship HHG for relocating employees, they are:

- 1) Actual Expense Method; and
- 2) Commuted Rate Schedule Method.

Although it is DOI preference to use the Actual Expense Method to transfer HHG and personal effects, the Commuted Rate Schedule Method can be used only if requested by the employee and only if a cost comparison shows using the method will provide a cost savings to the Government.

If the employee chooses to ship their HHG using the Actual Expense Method and that method is authorized, the cost of reimbursement will be limited to the lesser of the Commuted Rate Schedule Method or the Actual Expense Method.

When the Actual Expense Method is selected, the PCS Coordinator will initiate a Bill of Lading (BL).

### 6.2. HHG and Personal Effects Shipped under the Actual Expense Method

HHG and personal effects transported at Government expense for an official change of station include household furnishings, equipment and appliances, furniture, clothing, books, snowmobiles and vehicles with two or three wheels (i.e., motorcycles, mopeds, golf carts, and similar property).

Items listed below are not allowed to be included in the government arranged HHG shipment:

- Automobiles, trucks, vans, and similar motor vehicles; large boats that will not easily fit in with the HHG shipment; airplanes; gliders; mobile homes; camper trailers; and farming vehicles; outboard motors; major vehicle parts such as engines;
- Live animals, birds, fowls, and reptiles;
- Cord wood and building materials; and
- Property for resale, disposal, or commercial use rather than for use by the employee or the immediate family.

**NOTE:** Generally, the tariffs filed with the Department of Transportation prohibit HHG carriers from accepting the articles listed below for shipment. Employees are advised to consult applicable tariffs or to contact the carrier involved if problems arise concerning shipment of the following prohibited articles:

- A. Property liable to impregnate or otherwise damage equipment or other property (e.g. hazardous articles including explosives, flammable and corrosive materials, poisons, etc.);
- B. Articles that cannot be taken from the premises without damage to the article or premises;

- C. Perishable articles including frozen foods, articles requiring refrigeration, or perishable plants unless:
1. Shipment is to be transported not more than 150 miles and/or delivery accomplished within 24 hours from the time of loading;
  2. No storage of shipment is required; and
  3. No preliminary or en route servicing or watering or other preservative method is required of the carrier.

### 6.3. Weight Allowances

The HHG shipment weight is limited to 18,000 pounds with an extra 2,000 pound allowance for crating and shipment materials when the items are shipped uncrated or by van line. Employees will be billed for any non-allowable items such as weight in excess of 20,000 pounds or extra valuation insurance. Professional books and papers do not count against this weight limit when authorized as noted later on in section 6.15.

### 6.4. Disassemble/Reassemble

It is the employee's responsibility to disassemble before moving and to reassemble after moving the following items: ice maker refrigerator, swing sets, outdoor playground equipment, television and radio antenna, satellite dishes, storage sheds, gas dryers, pool tables, hot tubs, water beds, and dog kennel/dog run. If the employee is not qualified to complete this task, he/she may hire a certified technician and claim the charge as part of the miscellaneous expenses on the travel voucher.

### 6.5. Carrier Parking, Inventory, and Loading of HHG

The employee should watch carefully as the carrier packs, inventories, and loads the HHG. The employee should receive a complete copy of the carrier's inventory form. Notations should be made on the inventory form regarding any disagreement there may be with the carrier's evaluation of the condition of the HHG before the employee signs the inventory form. If the employee is claiming full valuation and there are any items of exceptional value, the employee should make certain that a copy of a bona fide, current appraisal of the exceptional item is attached to the inventory copy being retained.

**NOTE:** It is not recommended that the employee attempt to pack their own HHG. The carrier will not accept any responsibility for goods that they do not inventory or pack themselves.

### 6.6. Carrier Delivery and Unpacking of HHG

The moving company will unpack HHG upon request. This consists of unpacking the items and placing them on counter tops, tabletops, or the floor, etc. The moving company is only required to place furniture one time - not moving it to several locations as the employee decides the best location. The employee should watch carefully as the carrier unloads and unpacks the HHG. Any damage or loss caused by shipment should be noted on the delivery receipt before it is signed. The carrier's driver should co-sign the notation. The carrier is also responsible for removing all the debris of everything they unpack.

It is recommended that you allow the moving company to unpack your goods. If you unpack your own goods you may be responsible for the removal of packing debris. It is also harder to prove damage or loss of your goods that were caused by the mover once the mover has left your premises.



## 6.7. Loss or Damage of HHG

If the employee detects loss or damage upon delivery, the incident should be noted on the inventory. The carrier's driver should also sign. If the driver refuses, or if the loss or damage is discovered later, immediately call the carrier's destination agent and request a representative to verify the loss or damage. Promptly prepare a list of the lost or damaged items showing the following information for each item:

- A. Carrier's inventory number
- B. Description of item
- C. Description of damage or statement of loss
- D. Estimated purchase date and cost of the lost or damaged article
- E. Repair or replacement costs
- F. Estimated weight

The employee is responsible for submitting a claim to the carrier in writing that contains the information indicated above. A copy of the carrier's inventory form should be included and indicate if an inspection was made or refused. The carrier has 120 days to pay, decline, or offer a compromise settlement. If settlement is not reached at the end of 120 days, the employee should contact the PCS Coordinator for assistance.

## 6.8. Reimbursement for Shipping

There may be instances when an employee may want HHG located in multiple locations (across town or in another city) picked up and/or delivered. These special arrangements can be made provided the cost to the Government does not exceed the cost of shipment in one lot by the most economical route from the place of actual residence to the new residence at the official duty station. An extra pickup and/or delivery can be included on the BL if the extra stop is on the carrier's route; otherwise, a separate BL will need to be issued.

## 6.9. Commuted Rate Method (CONUS Only)

Employees should contact the PCS Coordinator for a GSA Transportation Management Services Solution (TMSS) cost comparison and further guidance before proposing to use this method. It is DOI policy not to authorize the commuted rate method unless the gaining agency's relocation coordinator determines it is the most cost effective means.

If the employee is authorized to move HHG by the commuted rate method, reimbursement claim will be made on an SF-1012, Travel Voucher. The following supporting documentation must be included:

- A. If a commercial carrier is used, a receipted copy of the bill of lading, including any attached weight certificates; or
- B. If a commercial carrier is not used, a proper weight certificates showing date weighed, gross weight (vehicle and HHG), and tare weight (vehicle alone). When hauling goods in several trips, weight certificates are required for each trip. Reimbursement is based on the cumulative total of all weight certificates that have been signed by the individual operating the scales. If the scales are not

available at the point of origin, a weight certificate must be obtained at some point en route. If HHG are weighed en route, a statement must appear on the voucher that no additional HHG were obtained between the origin and destination points of the shipment.

**NOTE:** The net weight of the HHG must not include property for resale or disposal, boats, airplanes, mobile homes, motor vehicles (other than two or three wheeled vehicles such as golf carts, mopeds, motorcycles, snowmobiles), wine or liquor, livestock, property belonging to persons other than employee and immediate family, property intended for use in a business or commercial enterprise, or property that is illegal to transport according to interstate commerce.

When HHG shipped by Commuted Rate Method are stored, the reimbursement of storage cost must be supported by proper receipts. The rules that govern the duration of storage of HHG, also apply to HHG shipped under the Commuted Rate Method.

Under no circumstances will the total reimbursement made for HHG shipped and stored under the Commuted Rate Method exceed what is allowed under the applicable rates published in the Nationwide Household Goods Commercial Relocation Tariff, which is issued by the Household Goods Carrier's Bureau.

## 6.10. Shipment of HHG To and From OCONUS

This section contains special rules that are applicable to transporting HHG at Government expense to, from, and between points OCONUS.

### 6.10.1. Allowable Costs

**Actual expense basis** - Transportation authorized under this subparagraph will be the actual expense basis. Actual expenses include the costs of transporting HHG, packing, and crating (including packing and crating materials and temporary containers), unpacking, and other necessary accessorial charges within applicable limits.

**Drayage** - If door-to-door, common moving carrier rates are not available between the origination point and the destination point, HHG may need to be drayed (transported by other means) part of the way by another carrier type. These allowable costs include the actual costs of drayage to and from the common moving carrier's final delivery point for HHG not in excess of the authorized weight.

**Lift vans.** Charges allowable for packing, crating, and for transportation include expenses incurred in hiring, transporting, and packing lifting vans when shipments are made in whole or in part by water, but do not include charges in connection with any shipment or storage of empty lift vans or import duties on lift vans.

**Valuation** - The valuation of property as declared for shipping will not exceed that to which the lowest freight rates will apply. An employee may declare excess valuation above the minimum permitted if he/she assumes all additional expenses as a result of the excess valuation, including the cost of insurance needed to protect the higher valuation.

### 6.10.2. Procedures Applicable

**Transportation and related services** - The allowable transportation and related services may be obtained from any available commercial carrier, except that all shipments of property by water will be made on ships registered under the laws of the U.S., whenever such ships are available.

**Use of Bill of Lading** - Commercial shipments will be made on Bills of Lading or purchase orders, whenever possible; otherwise, reimbursement will be made to the employee for transportation expenses actually and necessarily incurred within the limitations prescribed by this section.

**Itemization of charges** - If the services rendered cover, in addition to transportation, other services such as packing, crating, drayage, unpacking, and temporary storage, the total charge for the services must be itemized to show the charge for each service.

### 6.11. Temporary Storage of HHG (CONUS Locations)

For assignments to CONUS duty locations temporary storage may be authorized for 60 days or less. Charges incidental to and arising from temporary storage of HHG and personal effects are considered part of the actual storage and drayage from place of storage to the new residence. Storage of HHG beyond 30 days is treated as a taxable income item and is reported to the payroll office. Please be aware that this is reported taxable income paid to a third party and will be reflected on the employee's Leave and Earnings Statement. Please contact the PCS Coordinator for more information on expected storage over 30 days.

### 6.12. Extension of Storage Time Allowed (CONUS)

The initial 60 days of temporary storage may be extended up to an additional 90 days, if warranted. The employee may request such additional storage by memo to the delegated approving authority. Examples of circumstances that could justify additional storage are:

- A. An intervening temporary duty assignment or long term training agreement;
- B. Non-availability of suitable housing at the new duty location;
- C. Serious illness of employee or illness/death of dependent;
- D. Delays in construction work on a new or renovated residence;
- E. Strikes, acts of nature or other circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

The maximum number of temporary storage days the Government will pay for is 150. If a shipment is in storage past 150 days, it will be converted to commercial storage, the insurance coverage under the Government contract terminates, and the employee is responsible for the additional storage costs.

The employee is still entitled to a delivery out of storage at Government expense even if the time in storage exceeds 150 days as long as the delivery out of storage is prior to the ending date of the one year period allowed for completion of a PCS. The only exception to this time limit would be if an extension of time to incur relocation expenses due to acceptable delays in the purchase of a residence has been granted for the relocation.

### **6.13. Temporary Storage of HHG (OCONUS)**

For assignments to or from OCONUS duty locations temporary storage may be authorized for 90 days or less. Charges incidental to and arising from temporary storage of HHG and personal effects are considered part of the actual storage and drayage from place of storage to the new residence. Storage of HHG beyond 30 days is treated as a taxable income item and is reported to the payroll office. Please be aware that this is reported taxable income paid to a third party and will be reflected on the employee's Leave and Earnings Statement. Please contact the PCS Coordinator for more information on expected storage over 30 days.

### **6.14. Extension of Storage Time Allowed (OCONUS)**

The initial 90 days of temporary storage may be extended for an additional 90 days, or portion thereof, if warranted. The employee may request such additional 90 days by sending a memo to the delegated authority. Examples of circumstances that could justify the additional storage are:

- A. An intervening temporary duty assignment or long term training agreement;
- B. Non-availability of suitable housing at the new duty location;
- C. Serious illness of employee or illness/death of dependent;
- D. Delays in construction work on a new or renovated residence;
- E. Strikes, acts of nature or other circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

The maximum number of temporary storage days the Government will pay for is 180. If a shipment is in storage past 180 days, it will be converted to commercial storage and the insurance coverage under the Government contract terminates. The employee is still entitled to a delivery out of storage at Government expense even if the time in storage exceeds 180 days as long as the delivery out of storage is prior to the ending date of the one year period allowed for completion of a PCS. The only exception to this time limit would be if an extension has been granted for the relocation.

### **6.15. Shipment of Professional Books and Papers**

An employee may be authorized to ship professional books, papers, and equipment in addition to HHG. The term "professional books, papers, and equipment" includes those professional or specialized items and other materials that are personally owned by the employee for use in the performance of official duties. The term does not include a home office, shop fixtures, sports equipment or furniture; e.g., bookcases, file cabinets, desks, and racks of any kind even though used in connection with the professional books, papers, and equipment.

To obtain approval to ship professional books, papers, and equipment, the employee must submit a written inventory for review by the new supervisor in the gaining office prior to arranging the shipment of HHG. That supervisor must review and certify that the professional books, papers, and equipment as itemized are necessary in the proper performance of the employee's duties at the new official duty station and that if these items were not transported to the new official duty station, the same or similar items would have to be obtained at Government expense for the employee's use at the new official duty station and notify the bureau PCS Coordinator of the shipment. The bureau PCS Coordinator will amend the authorization as needed and ensure that arrangements are made to ship the professional books and papers. When professional books, etc., are shipped in the same lot with other HHG and personal effects using the actual expense method, the items must be packed and weighed separately. The BL must contain separate weight and cost associated with the professional book items.

## 6.16. Do It Yourself (DITY) Shipment of HHG

Employees are not required to move their HHG by the method authorized by the DOI. If they should choose to move their HHG by themselves they will be reimbursed for their actual moving costs, up to the cost DOI would have incurred by the authorized method. Employees also assume the responsibility of insuring the movement of their HHG against damages or loss incurred during shipment.

The weight limitation for HHG on a DITY move is 18,000lbs, and another 2,000 lbs will be allowed for packing materials. The employee will be responsible for obtaining proper weight certificates showing date weighed, gross weight (vehicle and HHG), and tare weight (vehicle alone). When hauling HHG in several trips, weight certificates are required for each trip. Reimbursement is based on the cumulative total of all weight certificates that have been signed by the individual operating the scales. If the scales are not available at the point of origin, a weight certificate must be obtained at some point en route. If HHG are weighed en route, a statement must appear on the voucher that no additional HHG were obtained between the origin and destination points of the shipment.

Claims for reimbursement of HHG shipment cost will be submitted using a SF-1012, travel claim form. All reimbursable expenses must be itemized and supported by proper receipt. The cost reimbursed must not exceed the lowest quote provided by TMSS based on the actual weight of the shipment. A quote must be requested from the PCS Coordinator no more than 5 business days after HHG have been weighed at destination.

## Chapter 7. Transportation of a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV)

### 7.1. Overview

The shipment of a POV is not an entitlement, but a discretionary allowance to be authorized only when determined to be in the best interest of the Government and pursuant to the conditions described below. The shipment of a POV must always be documented and pre-approved on a travel authorization.

### 7.2. Transportation of POV within CONUS

DOI regulations allow for the shipment of up to 2 POVs in connection with the transfer of an employee or new appointee within CONUS to their new official duty station, provided there are at least 2 licensed drivers listed on the employees relocation orders, and if:

- The gaining approving official, with consultation of the bureau PCS Coordinator, determines that shipment is in the interest of DOI and will benefit the gaining office;
- The old official duty station and new official duty station are located within CONUS;
- There is further determination by both the approving official, with consultation of the PCS coordinator, that it would be more advantageous and cost effective to DOI to transport your POV to the new official station at DOI expense and to pay for transportation of you and/or your immediate family by commercial means than to have you or an immediate family member drive the POV to the new official station;
- DOI determines that the POV is in operating order and legally titled and tagged for driving; and
- The distance that the POV is to be shipped is 600 miles or more.

If determination is made that the shipment of a POV is in the interest of DOI and will benefit the gaining office, the shipment of the vehicle will be handled on a separate BL, which will be initiated by the PCS Coordinator to cover the vehicle shipment. The POV will not be included as part of the employee's HHG shipment.

It is not permissible to ship one POV and drive a second POV, since the purpose of authorizing shipment of a POV is only if it is advantageous to DOI. If the employee must report to the new official station several weeks before the members of their immediate family, the Government can pay to ship one POV (the employee's) and pay for the family members to travel by common carrier transportation and the shipment of a second POV at a later date. However, the approving official and the PCS Coordinator must reevaluate whether the shipment of the 2 POV's is advantageous to DOI, as the delayed travel of the employee's family and the second POV shipment cost at a later date may not be advantageous to the Government.. There must be compelling reasons why the family must travel at a different time than the employee.

When a POV has been approved for shipping to the new official station, the Government will not pay for shipping additional personal items by air freight or pay excess baggage charges. **Likewise, the employee will not be reimbursed for a rental car or taxi at the new official duty station while waiting for delivery of the POV, as it is prohibited by law.** Additionally, the Government cannot provide a Government vehicle for the purpose of commuting to and from work while waiting for the arrival of the POV.

Insurance coverage on the POV while being transported to the new official duty station may vary between different insurance companies; therefore, employees should consult with their insurance company regarding the coverage during shipment.

### 7.3. Transportation of POV outside CONUS

An employee who is authorized to transfer to a post of duty OCONUS, or a new appointee or a student trainee assigned to the post of duty may be approved to ship a POV to that post of duty. Only one POV may be transported at DOI expense to the post of duty. The POV must be transported to the actual post of duty and not to an alternate location.

At the discretion of the gaining office approving official, a replacement POV may be authorized and shipped to the employee after every five years of continuous service from the date the employee first had use of the POV that is being replaced. The approving official should consider the working order of the employee's current vehicle and the availability of vehicles for purchase at the OCONUS official duty station, prior to authorizing the shipment to OCONUS of a replacement POV.

Generally, if DOI has authorized the employee to have a POV shipped to the post of duty OCONUS, it will authorize return shipment of a POV to their home of record upon completion of their service agreement.

## Chapter 8. Transportation of Mobile Home

### 8.1. Overview

An employee may transport a mobile home from the old official duty station to the new official duty station, provided that the mobile home is to be used as the employee's primary residence at the new official duty station and the new official duty station is within CONUS or Alaska.

### 8.2. Certification of Mobile Home Eligibility for Shipment

In order to be eligible for this allowance, the employee must make written certification on the SF1012 Travel Voucher that the mobile home is for use as the primary residence for the employee and his/her immediate family at the new official duty station.

### 8.3. Method of Transportation and Reimbursement of Mobile Home Shipment

If a commercial carrier transports the mobile home, reimbursement allowable is the actual amount charged by the commercial transporter, not exceeding the applicable tariff approved by Federal or State regulations for a mobile home unit of the size and type for the distance involved. This allowance includes: ferry fares; bridge, road, and tunnel tolls; taxes; charges of fees fixed by a State or other Government authority for permits to transport mobile homes in or through its jurisdiction; and carrier's service charge for obtaining necessary permits.

Preparation expenses specified under 302-10.204 will be allowed. This allowance does not include costs of preparing mobile homes for movement, maintenance, repairs, storage, insurance for valuation of homes above carriers' maximum liability, nor charges designated as "special services."

When transporting a mobile home by means other than a commercial carrier, such as when towed by a POV, the allowed reimbursement rate is 11 cents per mile for all transportation costs, including ferry fares, bridge, road, and tunnel tolls, and similar charges. No other allowance is made for transportation of a mobile home under this section. However, payment of the mileage allowance for use of a POV may be made as provided in Chapter 4 of this Handbook, in addition to the 11 cent allowance.

When transporting a mobile home partly by commercial carrier and partly by private means the allowances apply for each respective portion as described above.

Reimbursement is made upon receipt of the claim on SF-1012 Travel Voucher supported by receipts showing an itemized list of charges made by commercial carrier at 11 cents per mile for transportation costs plus the applicable rate for use of a POV.

A mobile home may also be transported by use of a Bill of Lading. Employees should contact their PCS Coordinator for information and/or issuance of a Bill of Lading.

There is detailed guidance on preparing a mobile home to be transported. Employees should contact their PCS Coordinator for up-to-date information.



Under no circumstances may the reimbursement for transporting a mobile home for use as a residence exceed the maximum amount that is allowable for the transportation of HHG and up to 90 days of temporary storage for those HHG (18,000 pounds maximum). The basis for the comparative cost is the commuted rate system prescribed by GSA.

Allowance for temporary quarters for employee and immediate family may be authorized only while awaiting arrival of a mobile home being shipped by a commercial carrier, not when being transported by a POV.

## Chapter 9. Real Estate Expenses and Unexpired Leases

### 9.1. Overview

This section is not applicable to new appointees and employees assigned under the Government Training Act (Public Law 85-807), since they are not authorized reimbursement for real estate expenses for the purchase or sale of a home, or expenses associated with unexpired leases.

A transferring employee must have an approved Permanent Change of Station travel authorization and a signed employment service agreement to be entitled to real estate expenses. The residence must be the actual residence or dwelling that employee commutes to and from on a daily basis and it must be the employee's residence at time the employee was officially notified of the move by their gaining office supervisor. The distance from old to new official duty station must be more than 50 miles from old to new official duty station in order to qualify for reimbursement of real estate expenses.

Once an employee is authorized to move and has met the conditions described above, the employee may be reimbursed for certain real estate expenses that are customarily paid in connection with:

- Sale of residence at old official station.
- Purchase (including construction) of a dwelling at new station.
- Settlement of an unexpired lease at old station.
- A mobile home that the employee uses as their residence and the lot on which it is located (old or new station).

To be eligible for reimbursement, the title to the residence at the old or new station (or the interest in a cooperatively owned dwelling on a pro rata basis; or an unexpired lease) must be either in the employee's name solely, in the employee's name jointly with one or more members of their immediate family, solely in the name of one or more members of the employee's immediate family, or with an individual accommodation party (an individual who signs an employee's financing agreement, e.g., a mortgage to lend his/her name (i.e., credit) to the arrangement).

Any land sold must be reasonably related to the residence site. The sale of excess acreage will be at the employee's own expense.

The settlement dates for the sale and purchase of a residence or lease termination transactions, for which reimbursement is requested, may not take place later than one year after the date on which the employee reports for duty at the new official station. However, if a written request to extend eligibility is received within 30 days after the expiration of one year period to incur said expense, an additional period of time, not to exceed one year, may be authorized if circumstances warrant. Such written requests should be made through the PCS Coordinator for processing.

Employees may not receive an advance of funds for residence transaction expenses.

## 9.2. Reimbursable Expenses for Residence Transactions

The following is a general list of reimbursable expenses relating to the sale or purchase of a residence (reimbursement may not exceed amounts customarily paid in the locality of the residence).

### 9.2.1. Sale (Old Residence) Transactions:

- Brokerage fees for the commission paid to a real estate agent for the sale of the employee's former residence and fees for a listing service, if not included in the commission paid to the broker or real estate agent.
- Advertising in the newspaper and/or other media when a direct sale is made without the services of a real estate agent.
- Appraisal fee for sales price of the residence.
- Legal (attorney) and related fees for searching the title, preparing abstracts, and providing a title opinion; costs of preparing conveyances, other instruments and contracts; related notary fees, cost of making surveys, preparing drawings or plats, recording fees and recording taxes (or other charges incidental to recordation), document preparation and flood certification.
- Penalty charge for prepayment of the mortgage on the employee's current residence when provided for on the mortgage instrument - not to exceed 3 months interest.
- Owner's title insurance policy - provided it is a prerequisite to financing or the transfer of property and the cost of other insurance that is a prerequisite to financing, or to transfer of property.
- Escrow agent's fee or settlement fee for closing a real estate transaction.
- State revenue stamps.
- Transfer or mortgage taxes.
- The cost of creating an amortization schedule.
- Power of Attorney (trustee fee).
- Release fee.
- Title examination.
- Title insurance binder (in lieu of title search).
- Inspections if required by Federal, State, or Local Laws (e.g., radon or termite).

**NOTE:** *This list is not all encompassing, but it does cover most expenses that are reimbursable. There may be closing expenses which are customarily paid that are not listed above. However, it is the employee's responsibility to provide detailed documentation supporting an expense as being customarily paid as a part of a residence transaction.*

### 9.2.2. Purchase (New Residence) Transactions:

- Appraisal fee for purchase for the residence.
- Inspection (environmental and property) when required by the mortgage lender incident to obtaining financing.
- Credit report when required for financing.
- Lenders title insurance policy - paid for by employee, on a residence purchased by the employee if required by the lender.
- Loan origination, generally limited to 1 percent of the amount of the new loan.
- Loan assumption, loan transfer fees, administrative fees, processing fees, and similar charges to that of the loan origination fee may be reimbursed in lieu of the loan origination, or in conjunction with, but not to exceed 1 percent of the amount of the new loan. Federal Housing Authority (FHA) or Veteran's Affairs (VA) application fee.
- Expenses in connection with construction of residence, which are comparable to expenses reimbursable in connection with, purchase of existing residence.
- The cost of creating an amortization schedule.
- Power of Attorney (trustee fee).
- Title examination.
- Title insurance binder (in lieu of title search).
- Inspections (e.g., radon or termite), if required by the lender or Federal, State, or Local Laws.
- Bridge loan and 2nd mortgage fees.
- Escrow agent's fee or settlement fee for closing a real estate transaction.
- State revenue stamps.
- Transfer or mortgage taxes.

**NOTE:** *This list is not all encompassing, but it does cover most expenses that are reimbursable. There may be closing expenses which are customarily paid that are not listed above. However, it is the employee's responsibility to provide detailed documentation supporting an expense as being customarily paid as a part of a residence transaction.*

### 9.3. Non-Reimbursable Costs and Limitations

In accordance with the real estate expense provisions of the Federal Travel Regulations, the following are non-reimbursable:

- Cost of litigation
- Broker fees or commissions paid in connection with the purchase of a new home
- VA funding fee
- Mortgage insurance premium (MIP)
- Administrative fee (part of loan origination fee)
- The cost of owner's title insurance, "record title" policy or mortgage insurance against damage or loss of property for one's own protection
- Maintenance and operating costs
- Property taxes
- Mortgage discounts, points, interest on loans, and losses in connection with the sale or purchase of a residence due to price or market conditions
- Hazard insurance
- Flood insurance
- Home warranty
- Warehouse fee
- Homeowner/condo fee
- Delivery, courier, mailing fees, or wire transfer fees when necessary for the sale/purchase of the residence and when procured by the employee or someone working with the employee. If procured by the lender, not reimbursable. The fee is then considered a finance charge.
- No fees, costs, charges, or expenses such as underwriting fee, processing fee, or tax service fee.
- Any expense determined to be part of a finance charge under the Truth in Lending Act or Regulation Z.
- Expenses that result from construction of a residence, except expenses that are reimbursable on the purchase of a home.

In addition, the following limitations apply to real estate transactions:

- Sale of residence – the total allowable reimbursement expenses must not exceed 10 percent of the actual sale price of the residence;
- Purchase of residence – the total allowable reimbursement must not exceed 5 percent of the purchase price of the residence. (FTR §302-11.300);
- Costs previously paid to a third party relocation company or required to be reimbursed to a third party relocation company for appraisals, title search fees, inspections, etc will not be reimbursable.

## 9.4. Documentation Requirements for Reimbursement of Real Estate Transactions (Sales or Purchases)

For reimbursement of real estate transactions, the following documentation must be submitted:

- Travel voucher - with appropriate signatures of employee and approving official;
- Form: *Employee Application for Reimbursement of Expenses Incurred Upon Sale or Purchase (or Both) of Residence Upon Change of Official Station* (check with your bureau PCS Coordinator);
- Settlement Statement (the employee must submit the final executed and signed copy; preliminary or estimated statements cannot be substituted);
- Purchase and/or Sales Agreement: (note that the employee cannot substitute Deed of Trust or escrow instructions). (The Purchase or Sales Agreement is the initial agreement negotiated between the purchaser and seller stating the terms and conditions of purchase or sale; it is a binding contract when signed.);
- Loan closing statements; and
- Receipts for all items paid outside of closing (POC); e.g., appraisals, credit report, and attorney's fees. (FTR §302-11.302).

## 9.5. Settlement of an Unexpired Lease

Expenses incurred for settling an unexpired lease (including month-to-month rental) at the old official duty station may include broker's fees for obtaining a sublease or charges for advertising an unexpired lease. Such expenses are reimbursable if one of the following conditions is met:

- Terms of the lease provide payment of settlement expenses; or
- Such expenses cannot be avoided by sublease or other arrangement; or
- The employee has not contributed to the expense by failing to give lease termination notice promptly after having had definite knowledge of the transfer; or
- The broker's fees or advertising charges are not in excess of those customarily charged for comparable services in that locality.

An employee seeking reimbursement must provide an itemized list of such expenses on the travel voucher and attach receipts and a copy of the lease.

## Chapter 10. Relocation Services

### 10.1. Overview

This section is not applicable to new appointees and employees assigned under the Government Training Act (Public Law 85-807) as they are not authorized the use of a relocation services contract.

Relocation services are services provided by a relocation services contractor (RSC) under a contract to assist the employee in relocating to a new official station. Government contracted RSC's provide assistance to employees by:

- Providing marketing assistance at reduced rates through the Buyer Value Option
- Making the employee an offer based on the appraised value of the home
- Offering services at the new official duty station for renters and buyers at no cost to the employee or the agency.

Relocation services should be utilized in areas of depressed housing markets as much as possible and should be used with discretion in areas of relatively strong or sustained housing sales. The purpose of relocation services is to meet a need of the Federal Government by providing home marketing and purchasing services to employees who own residences that are hard to sell, based on economic conditions of the residence location.

Un-awarded relocation services task orders will be stopped if an employee receives a valid offer to purchase his or her residence prior to task order award. The employee will sell their residence to the buyer if a valid offer is received. If the valid offer falls through and the residence is not sold, the bureau may reevaluate offering and awarding relocation services based on the housing markets true state in the area of the employee's residence.

### 10.2. Eligibility for Relocation Services

Relocation services are available to transferring employees who have been authorized the use of relocation third party services program, and are eligible for reimbursement of real estate expense. Not all homes may qualify or be accepted into the program.

In order to be eligible, the employee's home must be the actual residence owned and occupied by the employee at the time he/she was first informed of the transfer. The residence must be the place from which the employee regularly commuted to and from work when the employee received the official notice to relocate.

The employee must first be assigned to a RSC via authorization and contract award by the DOI and participate in pre-listing counseling offered by the RSC to be eligible for the Home Sale Services portion of this contract. Before the employee is enrolled in the home sale program, the RSC shall confirm with the Employee that he/she has been notified by the DOI relocation coordinator of DOI's specific requirements and contractual obligations regarding optional or mandatory use of the RSC's Home Marketing Assistance program.

The PCS Coordinator will provide advice to any employee authorized to use an RSC. The PCS Coordinator will discuss the services available through the relocation service contract upon the employee being selected for a new position or being advised of an impending relocation.

### 10.3. Residence Value Eligible for Relocation Services

The maximum value of an employee home may not exceed \$600,000 on a pro-rata basis, for eligibility in the relocation services program. Any buyer value, amended value or appraised value option offer for an employee residence that exceeds \$600,000 shall still be eligible for a relocation services contract; however the employee will be responsible for reimbursing the RSC for fees on the residence value that exceeds \$600,000.

### 10.4. Eligible and Non-Eligible Properties

Following is a brief summary of the relocation service eligibilities and processes. This is clearly a complex area and not all scenarios may be addressed in this booklet. The employee should contact the PCS Coordinator with any questions.

#### 10.4.1. Eligible Properties

In order to be an eligible property for relocation services contract, the property must be:

- the primary residence owned and occupied by employee at the time of the initial official notification of transfer;
- The place from which the transferee commutes to and from work on a daily basis.
- the name of the employee;
- in the joint name of the employee and one or more members of his/her immediate family as defined previously;

#### 10.4.2. Title Must be Vested

The title to the eligible residence must be:

- Solely in the name of one or more members of the employee's immediate family; or
- In the joint name of the employee and a separate unrelated joint owner (including a divorced or permanently separated spouse) – subject to pro rata reimbursement based on the percentage of the ownership of the vended property.

An employee will not be eligible for home sale services unless all owners satisfy the Government and the RSC of their willingness and ability to pay their proportional shares of the contract cost directly to the RSC. The Government will pay only a proportional share of the contract cost if:

- Any person(s) other than immediate family members owns a share in the residence.; or
- The residence is a duplex or other type of multiple-occupancy dwelling that is owned by an employee and/or his immediate family and is only partially occupied by the employee. (This restriction is not applicable to a case where an employee owns a condominium unit).

Sale of excess acreage will be at the employee's expense. Excess acreage is land that does not "reasonably relate" to the residence site, as determined by the RSC.



### 10.4.3. Non-eligible Properties

For all relocation services pricing options, the following properties are NOT eligible for the Home Sale Services portion of the contract:

- A. Mobile homes;
- B. Cooperative apartments;
- C. Houseboats;
- D. Non-residential properties converted into homes (i.e.; churches, schools, or other commercial buildings);
- E. Homes not insurable by neither national nor local insurer;
- F. Homes that cannot be financed by neither national nor local lenders;
- G. Homes that cannot be appraised or marketed
  - 1. Includes homes in remote or inaccessible locations where either no comparable sales exist or no sales have occurred in the 12 months preceding the date of the first appraisal or are otherwise considered unmarketable. The determination of such a home is at the discretion of the RSC but must be supported by objective documentation of factors that contributed to that determination. The RSC may refer such homes for Special Handling under SIN 653-5;
- H. Homes under construction or undergoing substantial renovations;
- I. Homes without potable water systems;
- J. Homes not in compliance with state and local codes in effect at the time the Home would be entered into the home sale services program
  - 1. Includes homes with non-compliant conditions that cannot be corrected in accordance with procedures in the "Appraisals" and "Amended Value Sales" sections in the GSA relocation services statement of work.
  - 2. Homes with toxic substances or other contamination as determined through the Disclosure Statement and/or Professional Inspection. This includes homes that have undergone inspection for contamination by toxic or hazardous substances and have been determined to be contaminated by toxic or hazardous substances or conditions (e.g., UFFI, radon gas, friable asbestos insulation, lead paint, and toxic mold). (RSC must provide GSA and the ordering agency with list of conditions or substances that fall within the RSC's definition of "toxic or hazardous substances" prior to accepting a task order or signing a BPA.) A property identified as having Exterior Insulation and Finishing Systems (EIFS) or Synthetic Stucco may be inspected or tested by the RSC for proper installation and/or moisture damage prior to acceptance into the home sale program. Homes near underground storage tanks or toxic waste sites may be inspected for evidence of seepage; and
  - 3. Homes that have been determined through a professional inspection to have defects that have not been addressed or remediated as outlined in Section 4.4 of this Statement of Work.

#### 10.4.4. Other Exclusions and Restrictions on Property

1. Homes, if rented to a Tenant, must be vacated by Tenant prior to the Employee's acceptance of the RSC's Appraised Value Offer. This restriction applies both to Appraised Value Sales and to Amended Value Sales under all pricing options;
2. Homes with utility services discontinued or shut off. Homes must have utilities on and paid current in accordance to the RSC's operational procedures for the property to be satisfactorily inspected and marketed.

Homes with land in excess of that which reasonably relates to the residence site and is typical and customary for the area are eligible for the program the Government will pay only the proportional share of the contract price that reasonably relates to the residence site. The DOI PCS Coordinator and the RSC shall determine the amount of land that reasonably relates to the residence site, based on the nature of the property in question and the prevailing conditions in the market for such property in the area.

#### 10.5. How to Begin the RSC Process

The following steps must be followed in order to initiate services with a RSC, when authorized:

1. Employee must complete the agency's "Request for Contractor Provided Relocation Services" form to request or decline the relocation services. A denial of the services is final and may not be changed;
2. If the employee accepts the services, the gaining office must prepare a requisition to order the services.
  - a. The Acquisition Office will issue a purchase order for a 120 day BVO relocation services contract and forward the purchase order to the RSC;
3. Within two (2) work days of the Employee's Authorization date or the contract award date, whichever is later, the RSC will contact the employee by telephone or email to counsel him or her on procedures specific to the terms and conditions of the services contracted;
4. Within two (2) work days of the date of initial telephone or email contact, the RSC will mail the employee information confirming the conversation and providing the employee with copies of all publications pertaining to the relocation program services applicable to the employee.

## 10.6. Options under the Relocation Services Program

### 10.6.1. Buyer Value Option (BVO)

The BVO is considered the most cost effective method when using relocation services. The RSC will contact the employee to discuss the marketing assistance available. If the employee can successfully market the home prior to the RSC appraisal process, this will significantly reduce the fees/expenses paid to the RSC.

The employee should work closely with the PCS Coordinator and the RSC to understand the BVO option. Upon receipt of the initial paperwork and disclosure statement, the RSC will order a title search, and any known required inspections.

Employees who are eligible for relocation services assistance are required to market their residence under a BVO contract for a period of 120 days. The RSC shall confirm that the employee is aware that he/she will be required to market the home by listing the home with a real estate broker. Employees are encouraged to use a real estate broker that is recommended by the relocation services provider to maximize the marketing of the home.

The employee must market their home within 105% of the Broker Market Analysis (BMA) most likely sales price to remain eligible for relocation services. If the employee receives an offer from a buyer for their home they will notify the RSC of the offer immediately. If the employee does not refer an offer to purchase the home to the RSC, this will automatically cancel participation in the program and the employee will not be reimbursed for any fees that the RSC has incurred.

### 10.6.2. Appraised Value Option

After the mandatory 120 day BVO period, the employee residence will be eligible for the appraised value option relocation services contract. The employee must still continue to actively market their home with a real estate broker and their home marketing price must continue to be within 105% of the BMA to remain eligible for relocation services.

After modification of the purchase order for the relocation service contract to provide for the appraised value option, the RSC will contact the employee to discuss the appraisal process and provide the employee with a list of qualified certified appraisers.

Within 2 working days after receipt of the appraiser list from the RSC, the employee shall choose two appraisers and one alternate in order of preference. The employee may present off-list appraisers to the RSC. The RSC has 10 work days to approve or disapprove the employee requested off-list appraiser. If a request is denied/ disapproved, the RSC must notify agency with explanation of why the off-list appraiser was denied/disapproved.

Upon notification of the transferee's choice of appraisers, the RSC shall, within one working day, order the appraisals. Appraised Value Offer shall be delivered to the employee within 30 calendar days from the date of the appraiser selection. An extension of an additional 15 days may be granted if circumstances warrant. Delay in completion of a home inspection report is not an acceptable basis for delay of an appraisal or an offer.

## 10.7. The Appraisal of the Residence in the Program

- A. Will be made on the property in an “as is” condition.
- B. Will utilize “Employee Relocation Council” appraisal form.
- C. The three appraisers will consider Worldwide ERC instructions of normal marketing time, up to 120 days for the appraisal assignment. Upon agreement between the RSC and ordering agency, the forecasting period may be decreased from 120 to 60 days
- D. Will require a third party appraisal, if the variance between the two appraisals is greater than 5 percent.
- E. Will permit the employee to submit comparable sales for the appraisers’ consideration although the appraiser may choose not to accept the comparables.

## 10.8. Appeal of the Appraisal

Employee’s are given one opportunity to appeal the appraisal(s) and must submit the reevaluation request to the DOI Relocation Coordinator and to the RSC, within 15 calendar days of receipt of the written offer. Any subsequent requests for reevaluation must have the concurrence of both the DOI Relocation Coordinator and the DOI Contracting Officer (CO). Reevaluation should be completed within the 60-day acceptance period.

## 10.9. Home Repairs under the Appraised Value Option

The RSC will obtain one estimate and advise the employee to obtain an estimate at the employee’s discretion and submit all bids for approval by the RSC. If repair estimates are in excess of \$1,000, the RSC and Employee may obtain another estimate. The RSC will review all estimates to ensure they encompass all repair issues and provide reasonable equitable resolution. The scope of work for which estimates are obtained shall be limited to the minimum work required to bring the item or component up to standards set by the manufacturer or to function as the item or component is intended, i.e.; the item or component must be functioning adequately for its intended use.

If the employee elects to complete any repairs and re-inspections, the employee will be required to complete these repairs prior to acceptance, but no later than 30 calendar days after receipt of the appraised value offer.

## 10.10. The Offer on the Residence

- 1. Within 2 working days of completion of the appraisal process, the RSC will make the employee a verbal offer. This offer will be the average of the 2 values or, in the case of a third appraisal, the average of the 2 closest appraisals.
- 2. The employee has 60 days from the date of the verbal offer to accept or reject the RSC’s appraised value offer or utilize the amended value offer option (see later section).
- 3. Within 2 working days of verbal receipt of Appraised Value Offer, the employee is required to reduce the list price of their residence to be within 105% of Appraised Value Offer amount. If the employee elects to appeal the appraisals, the 105% listing cap requirement will need to occur immediately upon appeal conclusion.

### 10.11. Acceptance of the Relocation Service Company's Appraised Value Offer

The employee signs the contract of sale, has it witnessed and returns it to the RSC.

### 10.12. Payment of Equity on Acceptance of Appraisal

For property not vacated at the time of acceptance:

1. If equity exists the RSC will pay 95 percent of the equity within 5 working days after the RSC's receipt of acceptance and execution of the contract of sale by the RSC; and
2. The five percent balance will be paid within 5 working days, to the employee upon vacating.

For property vacated at the time of acceptance:

1. The payment will be 100 percent of equity within 5 working days after receipt of the acceptance and execution of the contract of sale.

If the mortgage balance exceeds the accepted sales price, the employee must pay the RSC the deficit prior to the acquisition of the property

### 10.13. Vacating Old Residence Date

- A. The employee must vacate the property within 45 days after the day of acceptance of the RSC offer.
- B. The employee must maintain the property in the same condition as when it was appraised.
- C. The employee is responsible for carrying costs; i.e., mortgage, utilities, insurance, etc., until the vacate date.
- D. The employee transfers title directly to the RSC at the time of acceptance or the vacating date, whichever is later.
- E. **NOTE:** Homes must have utilities on and paid current in accordance to the RSC's operational procedures for the property to be satisfactorily inspected and marketed.

Other services offered at no costs to the employee or the Government includes:

- Marketing assistance -- at old official duty station
- Renter assistance -- at new official duty station
- Buyer assistance -- at new official duty station
- Mortgage counseling -- at new official duty station

## 10.14.No Dual Benefits on a Real Estate Sale

When an employee elects to use the Relocation Services options for the sale of residence, no additional expense may be reimbursed to the employee for the sale of that residence.

An employee has the right to cancel their request for relocation services or to reject the appraised value offer received from the RSC at any time prior to expiration of the offer. If the services are canceled or rejected, the RSC will be paid by the Government for all inspection fees, title search costs and appraisal costs that were incurred up to the point of cancellation/rejection. The employee is entitled to copies of any document(s) paid for by the Government that would be usable by the employee in selling the home on a reimbursement basis.

If during the appraisal process or the 30-day acceptance waiting period the employee receives an offer from an outside party that is equal to or more than the RSC's offer, the offer should be referred to the RSC. If the employee should decide not to turn the offer over to the RSC, and the offer falls through, this will automatically cancel participation in the program and the employee will not be reimbursed for any fees that the relocation service has incurred.

## 10.15.Amended Value Sale Option

If the contract for Home Sale Services has transitioned to an Appraised Value Option, an employee receiving an offer from an outside party may be eligible for the amended value program if the following procedures are followed:

1. The employee may not sign a third party offer or binder, accept earnest money, or accept a down payment on their home, and
2. The exclusion clause must be in the listing agreement.

The RSC will then determine whether:

1. All contingencies are acceptable.
2. The offer will net a greater return than the RSC's offer.

If so, the RSC will:

1. Instruct the employee to change the RSC's contract of sale to the higher offer price.
2. Instruct the employee to send the RSC a properly executed amended contract of sale, unsigned third party offer, and other necessary documents.

Following receipt of the paperwork, the RSC will calculate and pay any equity due to the employee, based on the amended value. The employee bears no risk if the sale falls through or if the original terms change. If the sale should fall through, the sale will revert to an appraised value sale and be filed accordingly.

The employee will be eligible for the Home Marketing Incentive Award if the amended value option is used and they meet the eligibility requirements described in this section. See Chapter 11 for more information.

## 10.16. Home Marketing Strategy, Clauses and Communication

Marketing strategies, recommendations and advice furnished by the RSC shall be provided in writing upon request of the employee.

The RSC shall advise the employee that any listing agreement with a real estate broker must contain the following exclusion clause:

*The seller(s) hereby reserve the right to sell the Property directly to (RSC Name) at any time and, in such event, to cancel this listing agreement with no obligation for commission or continuation of listing hereafter and to turn over an acceptable written offer hereunder to (RSC Name) for closing and payment of commission which shall be deemed earned and payable only upon closing to title.*

It is important that the employee keep the gaining office informed of the status of their home sale. If the employee is authorized to use relocation services, but delays initiation and in the meantime sells their house through a real estate agent without involving the RSC, the employee will not be eligible for the home sale incentive program. In the case of the above situation, the gaining office should also notify the RSC and cancel the order and de-obligate the funds.

## Chapter 11. Home Marketing Incentive Payments

### 11.1. Overview

This section is not applicable to new appointees and employees assigned under the Government Training Act (Public Law 85-807) as they are not authorized a home marketing incentive payment.

The DOI Financial Administration Management (FAM) 2006-013 provides authority for the agency to pay a home marketing incentive to a transferred employee who successfully markets his/her home while participating in the third party relocation service program. (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fams/fam2006-13.html>)

### 11.2. Eligibility

Participation in the program requires the employee to be authorized the use of the RSC under contract to GSA to provide home sale and home purchase services.

The gaining office will have discretionary authority on whether or not to authorize the use of relocation services program and the authorization must be clearly documented on the travel authorization.

An employee not authorized to participate in the third party relocation service program is not eligible for the home marketing incentive. A transferred employee who successfully markets his/her home while participating in the relocation service program which results in an amended value or BVO billing is eligible for an incentive award upon meeting the following conditions:

1. The employee lists or continues to list his/her home with a properly licensed real estate broker upon enrollment in the relocation service program (an exclusive clause must be in the real estate listing agreement that allows the employee to sell the residence to the RSC).
2. The employee enrolls his/her residence in the relocation service program within ten days of notification of authorization to move.
3. The employee finds a buyer for the home and refers them to the RSC. (The Buyer Value Option or Amended Value Option will apply. See Chapter 10 for further information.)
4. The RSC determines the prospective buyer is qualified and made a bona-fide offer.
5. The employee transfers the residence to the RSC.
6. The agency pays a reduced fee (i.e., amended value fee or BVO fee) to the RSC. Should the sale fall through, there will be no entitlement to the incentive award.

The primary purpose of the home marketing incentive program is to reduce the total cost associated with relocating an employee. Home marketing may not be used as a basis for justifying occupancy of temporary quarters or an additional period of temporary quarters may not be approved to allow more time for home marketing.



### 11.3. Incentive Payment BVO Sale

The amount of the incentive payment for a BVO sale will be the lesser of:

- A. 3 percent of the price the third party relocation service contractor paid the employee for the residence,
- B. The government savings resulting from the amended value sale, or
- C. \$10,000.00.

**NOTE:** The home marketing incentive payment will be claimed on an SF-1012 Travel Voucher and paid to the employee by the DOI payroll office or finance office. Payment to the employee will not occur until after all payments have been made to the RSC. The Internal Revenue Service Code requires the appropriate withholding for Federal, state and local income tax, Social Security and Medicare taxes. The gross amount of the payment will be included in the employee's taxable income on the Leave and Earnings Statement and on the W-2. Home marketing incentive payments are not covered by the withholding tax allowance (WTA) or the relocation income tax allowance (RITA).

### 11.4. Incentive Payment Amended Value Option Sale

The amount of the incentive payment for an amended value option will be the lesser of:

- A. 1.5 percent of the price the third party relocation service contractor paid the employee for the residence,
- B. The government savings resulting from the amended value sale, or
- C. \$5,000.00.

**NOTE:** The home marketing incentive payment will be claimed on an SF-1012 Travel Voucher and paid to the employee by the DOI payroll office or finance office. Payment to the employee will not occur until after all payments have been made to the RSC. The Internal Revenue Service Code requires the appropriate withholding for Federal, state and local income tax, Social Security and Medicare taxes. The gross amount of the payment will be included in the employee's taxable income on the Leave and Earnings Statement and on the W-2. Home marketing incentive payments are not covered by the withholding tax allowance (WTA) or the relocation income tax allowance (RITA).

## Chapter 12. Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA) and Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RITA)

The Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA) and the Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RITA) are allowances established to assist employees with the additional Federal, State or local income tax liability incurred as a result of a move. The allowances are developed by GSA in conjunction with the IRS.

These allowances are based on the assumption that relocated employees will itemize their deductions, rather than take the standard deduction on their tax return. Employees should review the IRS publications mentioned below and seek professional tax advice to determine how the relocation affects their personal tax situation.

### 12.1. Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA)

The WTA is an advance estimate of the RITA, which is added to each PCS claim, when needed, to defray an employee's out-of-pocket expenses. Each time covered taxable moving expenses are claimed, WTA is calculated and added to the travel voucher. The WTA only covers the estimated Federal withholding tax amount. The reimbursement amount the employee will receive will be the amount claimed less deductions for non-reimbursable items and the estimated amounts withheld for State taxes and FICA/Medicare.

The WTA is considered taxable income, and is subject to tax withholding. The total amount of an employee's WTAs paid during a calendar year, as well as the total of all other allowable moving expenses, is included on the W-2 as wages, tips, and other compensations.

### 12.2. Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RIT allowance or RITA)

The difference between the WTA and the RITA is that the WTA is an estimate of the Federal withholding taxes due and the RITA uses actual figures provided by the employee after the tax year to determine the Federal, State, and local tax effects from the move.

The RITA is calculated the year after the reimbursements involving taxable moving expenses along with a WTA, are received. For each year in which the employee receives a payment of covered taxable moving expenses and WTA, the following year the employee must submit a RITA travel voucher. The RITA utilizes actual figures provided by the employee to calculate the proper amounts that should have been reimbursed for Federal, State and local taxes.

To file a RITA claim, the employee must submit an SF 1012 (Travel Voucher), the Relocation Income Tax Allowance Certificate, copies of all W-2 forms and SE 1040 (self employment) forms for the employee (also for spouse if filing jointly). Forms 1099 are not applicable; the RITA is based only on earned income. All necessary forms will be provided to the employee by the Finance Office.

If the employee has been reimbursed more WTA than the RITA allowed, the employee will receive a bill of collection for the overpayment of the WTA. If the employee has not received enough WTA for the moving expenses, the employee will receive a payment to make up the difference.

Like the WTA, the RITA is considered taxable income; it is subject to tax withholding and must be reported on the W-2.

Employees who are relocating should be aware that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) considers certain expenses and allowances to be reported as income. Those that are not taxable generally may be deducted when filing the annual tax return. The following IRS publications may be helpful to the relocating employee: 1) Publication 463 – Travel, Entertainment, and Gift Expenses; 2) Publication 521 – Moving expenses; 3) Publication 525 Taxable and Nontaxable Changes; and 4) Publication 553 – Highlights of Current Tax Changes.

### **12.3. Taxable Reimbursements**

- All househunting expenses, including airfare and rental car
- En route M&IE (meals and incidental expenses)
- Mileage reimbursed that is over the IRS deductible mileage rate for moving expenses
- Temporary storage of HHG over 30 days
- Non-temporary storage of HHG
- Temporary quarters expenses
- Miscellaneous expense allowance
- Real estate expenses
- Home marketing incentive payment
- Withholding tax allowance (WTA) and relocation income tax allowance (RITA)
- Any payments made to a third party service on the employee's behalf that results from the cancellation of an RSC contract,

Taxes will be withheld directly from the travel voucher payment, and reimbursement for all of the above expenses are included in the gross income reported on an employee's W-2 form for the tax year in which reimbursement is paid.

### **12.4. Non-Taxable Reimbursement**

- Reimbursement for en route transportation and lodging expenses
- Shipment of HHG and the first 30 days of storage
- Shipment of POV
- Payment to third party relocation service for sale of residence

## Chapter 13. Miscellaneous Expense Allowance

This allowance is authorized to defray various contingent costs associated with an authorized change of official station.

**Exclusions:** New appointees and employees assigned under the Government Training Act (Public Law 85-807) are not authorized a miscellaneous expense allowance.

### 13.1. Types of Costs Covered

Reimbursement is allowed for, but not limited to, the following types of costs:

1. Connecting, disconnecting appliances, equipment, and utilities. (e.g., washers, antenna system, swimming pool, ice maker refrigerator).
2. Converting appliances so they are operable under available utilities at new official station.
3. Unblocking, blocking, and related expenses in connection with relocating a mobile home, but not the transportation costs.
4. Cutting and fitting rugs, draperies, and curtains moved from one permanent residence to another.
5. Utility fees, deposits, and relocation expenses that will not be offset by eventual refunds.
6. Forfeiture losses on medical, dental and food locker contracts that is not transferable.
7. Automobile registration, drivers' license, and use tax imposed for bringing automobiles and mobile homes into some jurisdictions.
8. Adjustments to old furnishings (e.g., grandfather clock, piano tuning, washer cycle check, adjustment to refrigerator).
9. Telephone calls and telegrams concerning otherwise allowable expenses, such as long distance telephone calls made in connection with the sale of residence at old official duty station.
10. Forfeited purchase deposit when transfer prevented employee from completing a planned purchase of property at old official duty station.

## 13.2. Types of Costs Not Covered

This allowance shall not be used to reimburse the employee for costs or expenses exceeding maximums provided by statute or regulations; costs reimbursed under other laws or regulations; costs incurred because of personal reasons or preferences and not required because of move; losses covered by insurance; fines or other penalties; judgments, court costs, and similar expenses from civil actions; or any other expense caused by circumstances, factors, or actions, in which the move to a new duty was not the proximate cause. Examples of these are as follows:

- Losses in selling or buying real and personal property and costs items related to such transactions;
- Cost of additional insurance on HHG while in transit to the new official station or cost of loss or damage to such property;
- Additional costs of moving HHG caused by exceeding the maximum weight limitation for which the employee has eligibility as provided for;
- Cost of newly acquired items, such as the purchase or installation cost of new rugs or draperies;
- Higher income, real estate, sales, or other taxes as the result of establishing residence in the new locality;
- Fines imposed for traffic infractions while en route to the new official station;
- Losses as the result of the sale or disposal of items of personal property not considered convenient or practicable to move;
- Damage or loss of clothing, luggage, or other personal effects while traveling to the new official station locality;
- Medical expenses due to illness or injuries of the employee or members of the immediate family while en route to the new official station or while living in temporary quarters at Government expense;
- Costs incurred in connection with structural alterations; remodeling or modernizing of living quarters, garages or other buildings to accommodate privately owned autos, appliances or equipment; or the cost of replacing or repairing worn-out or defective appliances, or equipment shipped to the new location.

### 13.3. Allowable Reimbursement Amounts

The amounts listed may be paid without support or other documentation

- \$650 or the equivalent of 1 week's basic pay, whichever is less, for an employee without immediate family.
- \$1300 or the equivalent of 2 week's basic pay, whichever is less, for an employee with immediate family.

An amount in excess of that listed above may be approved if the claim is supported by receipts or other acceptable evidence justifying the amounts claimed, provided the aggregate amount does not exceed:

- One week's basic pay at the time an employee without immediate family reports for duty.
- Two week's basic pay at the time an employee with immediate family reports for duty.

This allowance may never exceed the maximum two week base general scale pay rate for a Grade 13, Step 10 as provided in 5 U.S.C. 5332.

## Chapter 14. Overseas Tour Renewal Agreement Travel

Overseas Tour Renewal Agreement Travel (OTRAT) refers to travel of the employee and his immediate family returning to their home in the continental United States, Alaska, or Hawaii between overseas tours of duty. The Department has determined that OTRAT is necessary for recruitment and retention of employees in a post of duty overseas or in remote locations of Alaska and Hawaii. Points of contact are the PCS Coordinator and the servicing Human Resources Office.

### 14.1. Definitions

**Immediate Family** - Includes those individuals listed in 41 CFR 300-3.1 as well as:

1. **Spouse.** A spouse is an employee's legal husband or wife who is a member of the employee's household at the time the employee reports for duty.
2. **Same sex domestic partner.** A same sex domestic partner of the relocating employee who meets the definition of a "domestic partnership" as set forth in FTR Chapter 300-3.1.
3. **Former Spouse.** A former spouse is a legally separated or divorced spouse of an employee. Former spouses retain certain transfer of station entitlements when their former spouse earned these rights upon transfer to an overseas or OCONUS location and completed the requirements of their Initial Overseas Agreement.
4. **Child of Employee.** The child of an employee must be under 21 years of age and unmarried or who, regardless of age, is physically and mentally unable to support themselves to be eligible for any benefits associated with OTRAT.

**NOTE:** The child of an employee who is under joint legal and physical custody of the employee and former spouse may be considered a member of the employee's household for OTRAT purposes if residing there more than 50 percent of the time. (CG Decision B-242503, May 5, 1991)

**Home of Record** - The Home of Record (HOR) is the place the employee was living when they were transferred or appointed to an overseas assignment. The HOR does not change during the period overseas duty. The HOR determines the maximum travel and transportation allowances.

**OTRAT Effective Date** - The OTRAT Effective Date begins the day the employee reports for duty at the new official duty station. The tour ends at the close of business the day before the anniversary date. For example, an employee who signed a 2-year employment service agreement arrives at their OCONUS post January 11, 2002, and reports for duty on January 13, 2002. The eligibility date for OTRAT would be close of business January 12, 2004. The employee may retain the anniversary date for future OTRAT travel as long as they travel within the eligibility period.

**Eligibility Period** - The employee may take OTRAT within six months after the effective date and still maintain their anniversary date.

## 14.2. Eligibility

**OCONUS** (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) - The employee is eligible to receive OTRAT if he has:

1. Completed his tour of duty;
2. Completed the employment service agreement time period; and
3. Signed a new employment service agreement to remain at the overseas post or to transfer to another overseas post of duty.

**Alaska and Hawaii** - Employees in Alaska and Hawaii may receive OTRAT under one of the following conditions:

1. Employees who have been on continuous "overseas" duty in Alaska and Hawaii since before September 8, 1982, retain their OTRAT benefits until they leave Alaska or Hawaii or separate from government service. The employee's 'grandfathered' status allows OTRAT for each completed employment service agreement. However, the employee must initiate a new employment service agreement for another "overseas" tour.
2. Employees hired for "overseas" duty in Alaska and Hawaii after September 8, 1982, may be entitled to two round trips within five years from the effective date of transfer. Before tour renewal may be taken, the employee must complete the agreed period of service designated on the employment service agreement and enter into a new employment service agreement to serve an additional "overseas" tour of duty.

Employees who are limited to two OTRAT trips in 5 years must take their first trip before the end of the third year. Otherwise they will lose their eligibility for the second trip because the employee would not be able to complete a second 2-year employment service agreement within the 5-year limit. The employee may take their second OTRAT after completing one year of the next tour. However, by taking the OTRAT after completing only one year of the second 2-year employment service agreement, the employee would be obligated to complete the current remaining tour, plus the next 2-year employment service agreement for a total of three years.

## 14.3. Employment Service Agreement

The employment service agreement for an overseas tour will be for a two-year period unless it is known in advance that the assignment will terminate before the two years will have elapsed. Agreements for second and subsequent tours overseas will be for two years.



## 14.4. Allowable Travel and Transportation

Travel of the employee and immediate family must begin and end at the employee's official duty station. The authorized travel and associated costs are to the employee's home of record designated on their employment service agreement.

**Travel** - The employee may claim per diem at the standard CONUS rate if travel status is greater than 12 hours. Layovers may be permitted if travel to the home of record would be greater than 14 hours (wheels up to wheels down). Immediate family members are not entitled to per diem.

**Transportation** - Allowable transportation costs shall be determined based on the lowest available fare to the designated home of record at the time of booking including any non-refundable fares.

If the employee is traveling to their home of record and there is need for ground transportation to transport the employee to their actual home of record; reimbursement will be made based upon the most economical means of transportation to transport the employee and eligible family members to their home of record, whether it is shuttle, local transit, taxi, or other means. Cost estimates of ground transportation will be used to determine what is the most economical. If the employee and eligible family members use a means of transportation other than what is most economical, the cost of actual ground transportation will be limited to the cost estimate of the most economical means.

**Alternate Destinations** - The employee and/or immediate family members may travel to alternate locations. The employee will be responsible for any costs in excess of those determined for transportation for a non-refundable fare cost to their identified home of record.

If the alternate location is to a foreign country, the employee or immediate family member must spend at least 25 percent of the total time away from the official duty station within the US, Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, or a US territory or possession.

## 14.5. Liability of Employee—Noncompliance with New Agreement

The employee is expected to complete the employment service agreement at the same or another duty point outside the continental United States. The employee will be held financially liable and indebted to the Government if they fail to complete the employment service agreement when circumstances are within the employee's control and unacceptable to the agency.

An employee who leaves before the end of the first year of service will be held liable for repayment of OTRAT costs. If the employee serves at least one year or more of the new employment service agreement, the employee will not be obligated to repay the costs of the OTRAT. However, if the employee fails to complete the second year of service they will have to repay the OTRAT costs in order to maintain their return entitlement.

## 14.6. Limitations

**Dual career** - If a husband, wife, or same sex domestic partner are employed in the immediate geographic area by the same or different agencies, the OTRAT allowances authorized shall apply to each of them separately, in which instance neither of them is eligible for any allowances as a immediate family member. If there are other family members, they shall not receive 'duplicate' allowances because of the fact that husband, wife or same sex domestic partners are employees; they are entitled to only two OTRATs trips within a five-year period. A determination must be made in writing as to which employee's entitlement the immediate family members are going to travel under – the employee's, the spouse or same sex domestic partner.

**Local Hires** - Local hires are not eligible for OTRAT.

**POV** - Use of POV is limited to the constructed costs to the nearest major airport to the home of record.

**Rental Vehicles** - Rental vehicles are the responsibility of the employee.

**Travel Advance** - Travel advances are not permitted for OTRAT.

**Travel Time** - Time associated with OTRAT will be annual leave and/or personal time. Travel Compensatory Travel Time cannot be earned for OTRAT.